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OR, TRAPPING THE

Gilt-Edge Sharpers.

BY DR. NOEL DUNBAR,
AUTHOR OF "THE PLANTER DETECTIVE."

CHAPTER I.
AT BAY FOR GOLD!

"Is he dead?"
"No, but he is dying, though he may live yet several days. He is sleeping now. He has been longing for your coming and also for some one else, for he said he wished to confess with his lips what he has written to be read after his death."

"Did he say *who* this other was?"

"No."

"Very well, I will remain by his bedside and relieve you of your duty as nurse."

A MOMENT SHE STOOD THERE, AS IF IRRESOLUTE; THEN BENT OVER THE TABLE.

The speakers were a man and a woman, the latter a professional nurse, the former, young, handsome, fashionably attired, but with a look of dissipation stamped upon his face.

He had just arrived as from a long journey, and had entered the home of his boyhood, where wealth and refinement were visible on all the surroundings.

The master of the mansion was upon his death-bed. His son had been sent for to receive his dying blessing, and had arrived in time, the nurse had said, for the dying man might linger for several days.

So the son, without changing his traveling-suit, was ushered into the dimly-lighted chamber, over whose bed the angel of death was already hovering.

It was a luxurious room, where all around would seem to cause the occupant to cling to life if only for the pleasures and comforts that riches could procure.

But within the curtained bed lay Leslie Seldon, whose sands of life were running out, and the silence of sleep upon him seemed akin to death.

The young man approached the couch, almost timidly, and gazed an instant upon the face, haggard, white, and with the shadow of the grave already creeping over it.

"She said he might live for days, that his mind was clear, and that he expected some one else."

"That one can only be the one whose name I saw in his confession the night I went to his safe, and if he comes then *he*, not *I* will be the heir, for he has left the blank space for the names to be filled in at the last minute. It would be my ruin if he *should* come."

To and fro, to and fro, noiselessly, like a tiger in his cage, the man paced the darkened room, while the dying man slept on.

"I have lost so much rest of late I can scarcely keep my eyes open, or is it the smell of medicines that makes me so drowsy? But I must keep awake, for much depends upon it. Vigilance now, if ever!"

Despite this resolve, the young man dropped into an easy-chair, threw his head back, and in an instant, it seemed, was in a deep slumber.

Then there glided noiselessly into the room a slender form of a woman, in whose hand was a bottle.

She stopped before the sleeping man.

"The chloroform has done its work, and I must hasten out or it will overpower me, also," she murmured.

On to the bed she proceeded, as noiseless as a shadow. Glancing sharply at the dying man she turned to the table whereon were the medicines.

A moment she stood there, as if irresolute; then bent over the table, and in another moment glided from the room as silently as she had entered it.

So passed the hours away until at last from the bed was heard a faint voice:

"Nurse!"

No response; and in a tremulous tone followed the words:

"Poor woman, she is tired out and has dropped off to sleep. I will take my medicine without disturbing her."

He thought that the form, indistinctly seen in the chair was that of the woman nurse.

Reaching the glass of medicine his trembling hand raised it to his lips and he took a swallow, and then sunk back exhausted.

"I will sleep again, for I am so drowsy. Can this be the sleep of death creeping over me? No, I will not die yet, for he cannot refuse to come—he *will* come!"

The words died away in a whisper, and the dying man again sunk to sleep.

The gray of dawn was creeping into the windows, paling the lamplight, when the sleeper in the chair awoke.

He started, passed his hand across his head and gazed about him in a bewildered way. He looked like one in a dream.

Then memory seemed to rush back into his brain, for he sprung to his feet and approached the bed, but his steps were unsteady.

A ray of sunlight just peeping through the blinds fell upon the face of the one on the bed.

It was a strong face, a noble one, though haggard from suffering and pinched with disease.

"My God! how like death! Ha! it is death! He is *dead*!"

The hand had rested lightly upon the pulse, and then crossing to the bell he gave it a violent ring.

The nurse at once appeared with placid face.

"My father is dead! I sunk to sleep, I fear, and when I awoke just now I found him dead."

The voice of the man quivered; he seemed deeply moved, and the nurse said, consolingly:

"It is better so, for he suffers no more; but it was sooner than the doctor, than all of us expected. Did you not speak to him, sir?"

"Not a word, and it hurts me to the heart. He is beyond all human aid; but send for the doctor and for the attorney, and let the latter take the keys to his desk. I will be in my room, so send the lawyer there when he comes."

The young man left the room and went to his own chamber in a wing of the elegant house.

It was furnished in the same luxurious manner as the rest of the mansion, and as he crossed the threshold he paused and glanced about him.

"It has been just half a year since I last was in this room, and since then, my God! what a change has come upon me. And, what holds the future for me?"

"Bah! why falter, when my destiny is in my own hands! To make or mar, my life is in my power now!"

His face was as white as that of the dead below-stairs, his lips set and his eyes burning as he paced the room, excitedly at first, but soon becoming more calm, until, ere an hour passed, he was wholly under self-control and did not start as there came a loud tap upon the door.

"Come in!"

In obedience to the summons there entered a man with a studious face, but one on which dwelt a look of constant worry, such as a man might wear who bore a secret he wished to hide forever from the world.

"Ah, Wilber, it is you. I am glad you have come so promptly. Father is dead, and I sent for you to take the keys of his desk."

"I have the keys, Mr. Seldon, and I am glad to welcome you home, though I sincerely regret the sad misfortune that has befallen you," answered the lawyer.

"You are not sincere, Wilber, for you are not glad to see me, as I am a constant reminder to you of—"

"I beg you to let the dead past bury its dead, Mr. Seldon."

And the lawyer spoke nervously.

"It depends upon you whether I will or not."

"Upon me?"

"Yes, for you wrote my father's will?"

"I did."

"It names two persons in it as heirs?"

"Ah! you know that?"

"Yes; but how I know it matters not to you. One of these is referred to as his *own* son, by his first wife, the other as the son of his second wife, who was a widow."

"Am I right?"

"You are."

"This son by the first wife, his real son, gets nine-tenths of the fortune?"

"Yes, if alive."

"If *alive*, yes; but the space where the names were to be are not yet filled in."

"You know this?"

"Yes, for they were left blank to fill in *after* my father had found his real son."

"If he was convinced that this son, whom he had wronged, was yet alive, then *he* was to be the heir, and the adopted son get the simple legacy."

"You seem to know the will most thoroughly."

"I do; but who were the witnesses?"

The lawyer started at the question, but made no reply.

"Answer me!"

"Carter Dunn and his wife."

"I thought so; and both were lost on the steamer that was sunk a few weeks ago?"

"Yes," the lawyer assented, reluctantly.

"Then, Ernest Wilber, I have just this to say to you, and that is that you go at once, get that will and put my name in the blank spaces, so as to make *me* the heir."

"Never! I will not be guilty—"

"Hold! Make no rash vows, Wilber, but hear me! I hold a secret against you, and, so help me Heaven! I will betray you, if you do not obey me now!"

"No! no! You will not do that?" came in pleading tones from the lawyer.

"I will do it, so help me God! while, on the other hand, if you do as I demand, I will vow never to refer to the past, or betray you, and, in addition, will pay into your hands, when I come in possession of my inheritance, twenty-five thousand dollars. You have just five minutes in which to decide!"

Taking out his watch, the young man, whose knowledge of the lawyer's secret made him his master, looked at it to note the time.

Ernest Wilber sprung to his feet and walked to the window, where he stood, gazing out upon the beautiful grounds surrounding the mansion.

"One minute more, Wilber!" came in the cold voice of his torturer.

"I accept your demand, except the money, sir, and will do as you wish; but not a dollar of the gold will I touch, for fear alone causes me to commit the crime that you require of me."

"It is no crime, for *he* is doubtless dead."

"It is a crime, for *he* is alive, though hiding under an assumed name. But all the same I obey; I fear to do otherwise."

There was something in the look of the lawyer that caused the man before him to drop his eyes under that almost agonizing gaze; but he said quickly:

"You are wise to obey, so pray lose no time in doing as I have requested."

Without a word Ernest Wilber left the room, while the other muttered:

"The game is mine!"

CHAPTER II.

MASTER OF THE SITUATION.

AFTER his interview with the lawyer, Rudolph Seldon kept his room, denying himself to all visitors who came with words of sympathy in his grief.

It was hinted by many that he naturally would feel his father's death more, as he had been an undutiful son, and had caused him many an hour of sorrow for his wild life; but, as he would be the heir, for the world knew of none other, to his father's large estate, his past orgies would be forgotten—his many misdeeds forgiven, for riches can so easily placate the world!

The body of Judge Seldon had been given in to the hands of his physician, who had expressed a wish to hold a *post-mortem* examination in behalf of science, as there were certain complications regarding his case which he wished to solve.

And when he had finished his work, and the body had been prepared for the grave and lay in state in the grand parlors of the mansion, Dr. Ross Reynolds requested an interview with the son of the dead judge.

"Tell him I am lying down—that I wish to see no one," was the message sent back by the servant.

"He must make an exception in my case," said the doctor, with a smile, and, at his tap on the door, he entered to be greeted by an angry look and the words:

"I requested not to be disturbed in my grief, sir."

"True, my dear friend, and your grief must be most poignant under the circumstances; but it was very necessary that I should see you."

The doctor smiled blandly and took a seat.

"And why, pray?"

"My dear Rudolph, do not excite yourself, I beg of you, for you are very pale now, and your pulse, I know, runs high; so calm yourself, and let us talk the matter over in a business way."

"What matter do you refer to?"

"The cause of your father's death!"

"Consumption was the cause, as I supposed you knew, it being your business to know."

"I know more than you suspect I do."

"In Heaven's name, Reynolds, what do you mean, with your innuendoes and hints?" rudely demanded the heir.

"As I said, we will talk it over in a business way, Rudolph, and I'll begin by saying that you know I stand at the head of my profession, and only for a very bad habit, I would be a very rich man; but I gamble, and I gamble to an extent that keeps me poor."

"I am at present in debt, owing some fifteen thousand dollars that give me much worry, and—"

"Doctor Reynolds, I see the drift of your words, for you think, now that I am heir, I can lend you money; but, I must say that it is most ungenerous, ignoble in you to come at such a time. I will give you an order on Lawyer Wilber for the amount of your bill and no further require your services."

"You are all wrong, Mr. Seldon, for I do not wish to borrow money. On the contrary, as I have just finished a *post-mortem* of your father, and know that he was murdered, I simply demand the money I need."

"Murdered! Great God, man, what do you mean?" and Rudolph sprung to his feet, white and trembling.

"I mean that, when I came to your father, I saw symptoms of poisoning."

"Mind you, he would have died of his disease within a week's time; but, had he lived through last night, he might have changed his will, you know."

"I saw poison on his lips, and I analyzed it. Then I decided upon a *post-mortem*, and I found in his stomach the poison that was given him last night, and which caused his sudden death."

"I said nothing about it to any one, asked for the glasses and medicines that had been on the table by his side, so have the glass of medicine into which the poison was put, and also have preserved the stomach, which is now at my office."

"Now you know why I came to you, sir."

It would be impossible to describe the look on the face of Rudolph Seldon as the doctor told his story. He fairly glared upon him until he ceased speaking and then said hoarsely:

"It is a *lie*! a lie, trumped up by you to force money from me, for you have already hinted as much. But, it is false, and if the poison is there, you put it there!"

"My dear Rudolph, you are excited; so calm yourself. Those who will be called in to testify, will state that the poison was *swallowed* by your father just an hour or so before his death. My last visit to him was *twenty hours* before he died, and he had been taking the medicine every half-hour. That medicine could do no harm; but *you* came home, last night, at ten; you sent the nurse away and became the watcher yourself, and he died some two hours after your arrival! You reported him dead at sunrise, and yet he had been dead over *six* hours, and so I know that others of my profes-

sion will decide when called to testify before the coroner.

"Now, I and the murderer, alone know that your father died of poison, for I have spoken to no one upon the subject *thus far*."

"One night, when he had fever, your father told me something of his past, and I know that there is another heir, so I naturally concluded, when I learned of your arrival and of your dismissal of the nurse, to act in her stead, and considered all other circumstances which I have made known to you, that *you know who poisoned your father, and why, Rudolph Seldon*," and the doctor looked squarely into the eyes of the heir.

The quick mind of Rudolph Seldon saw the situation at once; but, knowing that he was perfectly innocent of his father's death, yet he could not believe that the doctor was telling that which could be disproved by a test.

If his father was poisoned, who could have done the deed? Who had a motive for killing him a few days before he would naturally die?

In this train of thought he asked:

"Who could have done the deed, if it is as you say, Doctor Reynolds?"

The doctor laughed and replied:

"Who? Why, you did it, for who else had aught to gain?"

"Liar! traducer! I will—"

"Hold on, Rudolph Seldon, for I came not to visit a murderer unprepared to defend myself," and the doctor leveled a revolver at the heart of the young man.

Rudolph was no coward, but he shrunk from before the steady hand that held the weapon; he well knew the doctor's nerve.

"Leave my room and house, sir!" he sternly ordered.

"Certainly, and I will go to the authorities and make my report, as in duty bound."

"Hold! I asked you *who* could have done this vile deed, if it is as you say."

"That it is as I say, an examination by other physicians will prove. If you did not poison your father, and the circumstances all indicate that you did, why, suffering as he did, then he may have ended his own life by taking poison, for he had a case of medicines, you know."

"That was it, and it will be so accepted by all."

"You are a trifle too fast in jumping at conclusions, for where were you when he took the poison?"

The young man sunk back in his chair with a groan, and Dr. Reynolds continued:

"Now, all things point to your guilt, and when I give my testimony that there is another heir—in fact, when that other heir comes, then any jury will hang you on the evidence."

"Now, to save argument, let me say that your father took the poison himself, yet you will be arrested when I make my report. As I alone know or suspect anything, I can simply say nothing of it, let it be a dead secret between us."

"I need money sadly; give me a check dated ahead—say a month *after* you get your fortune—for twenty-five thousand dollars. Call it a loan, if you wish, but, rather than recall this sad subject by asking me for it, I feel that you will never make the demand."

The voice had become a whisper when Rudolph Seldon said:

"I am in your power, sir, and I must do as you say. I will give you the money."

"You are wise, my dear Rudolph, and pray accept my deepest sympathy in your loss—of *twenty-five thousand dollars*."

And, with a light laugh, the physician left the room.

CHAPTER III.

CLAWS BENEATH THE VELVET.

THE Overland coach from a border mining-camp ran into a small station on time one pleasant morning, and from it alighted two persons, a fine-looking gentleman across the threshold of three-score years and a young girl whose beauty of face and form could not fail to attract attention anywhere.

The station was a junction where they were to meet the stage on the Overland, bound Eastward.

When these two had alighted they were told they had just half an hour for dinner.

The landlord of the log "hotel," station-agent and storekeeper, all in one, noticed that the young lady carried a sachel which she never allowed to go out of her hands for a second and carried it in to breakfast with her.

That the two were father and daughter there was no doubt, from the resemblance between them, as also from the fact that the young lady called the gentleman "Father."

"Landlord, I wish to ask you if there is much travel on the line just now?" the gentleman queried, of the station-agent, as, having finished breakfast, he stood with his daughter awaiting the incoming train, which was late.

"Not just now, sir, but thar will be more when fall comes."

"And is there danger of being robbed on the line?"

"Waal, sir, no one knows, for travelers has ter take ther chances o' meetin' ther road-agents;

but I hasn't heerd o' any of ther coaches being held up o' late. Has yer much dust along with yer?"

"If you mean by dust, money, I have more than I care to be robbed of."

"Likely; but, you and thet pretty young leddy went through here last week, didn't yer?"

"Yes, but we passed your station by night."

"I know that; but I heerd ther drivers speaking of a generous old gent and a awful pretty gal thet went up to ther mines o' late."

"I have a large interest in the Goldbeam Mine, and went up to see about it;—but I hear the coach?"

"Yas, sir, she are a-comin' and in a hurry—Lor! who is that on ther box, for it hain't Ben Trotter, and, durn me ef it don't look like a Sky Pilot," and the agent looked amazed as the coach dashed around a curve and came up to the station in splendid style, the strange driver on the box handling the ribbons in a most masterly manner.

"Ho, Dick, I are the only inside, and on ther box are a young pulpit-pounder who hev druv the cattle in as I never seen 'em druv afore, for he's a dandy he is," and Ben Trotter, the regular driver of the coach looked out of the window, while the one he alluded to, a young man in clerical garb, quietly dismounted from the box.

"But what are up, Ben?" asked the agent anxiously.

"Oh, I struck a snag, when I wasn't looking, and got flung from ther box and hurted. One arm are broke and I hain't in good health all over, fer I hed a hard fall."

"Ther parson he sot ther bone fer me, and made me ride inside, saying afore he tuk ter grindin' Gospel he were rez on a farm, so c'u'd drive a leetle, and, maybe he can jist git away with me, and you knows me, Dick. Yer'll hev ter lift me out tender, for I kin hear my bones rattle when I moves."

Some of the stable-boys were called and the injured driver was carried into the station, while another took his place on the box, for it was the end of Ben Trotter's run.

The young clergyman meanwhile had entered the station to get his dinner. The elderly gentleman and young lady, who had seen and heard all, got into the coach.

In a few minutes the clergyman came out and entering the coach politely removed his hat, while he gave a bow of acknowledgment of the presence of his fellow-passengers.

Both the maiden and her father returned the bow, and the coach rolled upon its way.

The young girl, seeing that the young man was gazing out of the window at the scenery, looked at him with considerable interest without fear of notice by him, of her scrutiny.

His form was not only athletic but elegant, his clerical suit of the finest broadcloth, and there was about him a look of manliness in keeping with the confident manner in which he had brought the coach up to the station—a fact which had won the admiration of both herself and father.

His face, clean-shaven, was a strong one, with teeth even and milk-white, a resolute mouth and chin, and eyes full of expression yet as tender as a woman's.

His brow was massive and intelligent, and the shapely head sat well upon the solid shoulders.

Altogether the clergyman was one to bear well the keenest eye-inspection of a critical girl, and so the young lady thought.

The more she saw of his noble face, with a look in it sad rather than soberly severe, the more she was won by it.

But it was not very long before the maiden's reverie was brought to a startling termination by the stern command without:

"Halt that coach and hands up, Dan Carver!"

The coach came to a sudden halt, the old gentleman muttered something about having "feared it," and the face of the clergyman flushed while that of the maiden turned pale.

A moment after, the coach door was thrown open and a man with evil face and cocked revolver said:

"No use, pilgrims; I has you like a rat in a trap."

"You, old chap, are Stapleton, the rich mine-owner, ain't you?"

"My name is Stapleton, sir," answered the old gentleman, promptly and spiritedly.

"Well, I have word from my spies that you are carrying a large sum of money, and I want it, while I intend to hold you and your daughter prisoners until I get the money on a cheque you must write me for just twenty thousand more. What is the size of the pile your daughter carries in that bag?"

"Thirty thousand dollars, so take it and let us go on our way."

"I'll take it, yes, but you don't go until I get twenty thousand more, for I intend to retire from working the road and settle down in the East and become a reputable member of society. And—ha! ha!—maybe I'll join your church, parson."

"You certainly will not, poor, misguided man that you are, detain this gentleman and

his daughter, and rob them as well?" half asked and half protested the clergyman, in a deep, rich voice.

"I certainly shall, and you dry up or I'll take your pious suit to dress up the chaplain of my lay-out in."

"You hain't got much, I guesses, and as you are a Sky Pilot, I lets you go free, so don't chip in no chin-music, for this hain't no pulpit nor your Sunday to preach."

"But, sir, I will not permit you—"

"Shut!" and the revolver covered the clergyman, while the highwayman continued:

"I have four pards here to back me, so, no muscular Christianity here, or there'll be an opening in your church for another parson, for I means what I say, if I have to take life, and don't you forget it."

Quick as a flash the revolver was knocked upward; a shot followed; then the clergyman was out of the coach, a weapon in each hand; shots followed in rapid succession, succeeded by oaths, a groan and rushing feet.

"Yer has laid three of 'em out fer coffin fruit, parson, er fergive me for lyin'!" shouted the driver, and both the old gentleman and the maiden beheld the three men fall dead under the dead-shot fire of the young clergyman's revolver.

Then came the stern order from the passenger:

"Drive on, sir, for there may be more of them, from the signal those two ruffians gave as they fled!"

"I'll drive on, you bet!" and the coach rolled away the moment the clergyman had sprung in again.

"Oh, sir, you are wounded!" cried the maiden in alarm, as she saw his left sleeve cut and stained red.

"Yes, I received a bullet in my arm, miss, but it is only a flesh-wound, and there is a physician at the next station a few miles from here," was the quiet response.

"Driver, this brave gentleman is badly wounded, so drive on with all haste!" cried Mr. Stapleton.

"Fast it is!" answered the driver, cheerily, and the coach rattled along at a run.

"Permit me to tie my handkerchief about your arm, sir, to prevent its bleeding," said the young lady.

"Thank you, I will accept your services, miss; but, allow me to undeceive you. I am no clergyman; but, having been intrusted with a large sum of money by some friends, I assumed a clerical garb to prevent being robbed by the road raiders."

"I thought that you handled both the reins and a revolver remarkably well, sir, for one of the cloth. My daughter and myself owe you a debt of gratitude we can never forget or repay," said the elderly man, with deep feeling.

CHAPTER IV.

GUILTY, OR NOT GUILTY?

IN a handsome residence of a Western city a young girl paced the floor, the picture of grief, for her face was seamed with anguish and the flow of tears dimmed her beautiful eyes.

Her home and all her surroundings were elegant, and her appearance showed her to be a petted child of fortune.

Lovely in face, her form was exquisitely molded, while her rich dress fitted her faultlessly.

In her hands she held a telegram, which from time to time she would open and read, and each time a moan of anguish welled up from her heart.

"Oh, I cannot, cannot believe it! There is some fearful, some shameful mistake," she said, aloud, and her voice trembled with emotion.

Joyce Stapleton was the daughter of a rich merchant, and an only child. Her father had traveled over the world with her, and not a wish of her heart that was not granted by the fond parent.

And yet she was not spoiled by her father's devotion, nor by the admiration bestowed upon her; for, beautiful and an heiress, accomplished and possessed of a noble nature, she counted her visitors by the score.

On the morning when she is presented to the reader her father had left her, bright and cheerful in the library, to go down to his office, wherein he passed several hours of each day; but, soon after his departure that morning, a servant had brought her a telegram.

It did not startle her, as people are often wont to be startled by telegrams, so fraught are they many times with tidings of death and disaster.

She often received messages from friends, and so she broke open the envelope of this one with the thought that it was from some one who intended to visit her.

But her face became livid, the paper fell from her hands, and, had she not been seated, she would have fallen, so weak did she grow at the fearful words she read.

The telegram was as follows:

"I was arrested last night charged with robbing a bank and the death of the cashier."

"Letter explains all, but I telegraph you, as the papers will be full of the news."

"It is needless, I hope, to say to you that I am not guilty."

OCTAVE ARCHER.

And who was it that sent this startling telegram to Joyce Stapleton?

It was the young man who, nearly a year before, in the garb of a clergyman, had saved her father and herself from becoming the captives of the road-agents and the loss by the mine-owner of fifty thousand dollars.

They had found him to be painfully wounded, though not seriously so, and had remained at the village near the scene of the tragedy, until he was able to go on his way. In that time they had become good friends, and between Joyce Stapleton and Octave Archer the cornerstone of an affection deeper than friendship had been laid, for they had learned to love each other devotedly and in time became engaged.

More than that Octave Archer was a lawyer, with a small practice in a country town, neither Mr. Stapleton nor his daughter knew aught regarding him.

He was a gentleman born, strangely fascinating in manner, and very handsome, while he was well read, had traveled much about the world, though scarcely over twenty-seven, and confessed to having studied medicine, and given it up for the law, while he admitted having been a sailor, and a soldier as well, in his earlier years.

But it was the man Octave Archer that Joyce Stapleton loved, and some day she hoped she would know all about the man she had promised to marry.

Ere that day came, when it was but a short while before the time appointed for her to become his wife, the cruel dispatch was received, saying that he had been arrested for robbery, and a hint that it was even worse.

But his letter would explain all, he had said. Back from his office came Mr. Stapleton with the news gleaned from the morning telegraphic dispatches, and his brow was dark, his face stern.

Joyce handed him her telegram, and when he had read it he said:

"My poor child, I fear this can never be explained away; it is too terrible; but it is my fault, for we actually know nothing of the man, and he seemed to wish to hide his past from us. I knew that he was poor, but I never suspected him of a wrong act. My child, you have my deepest sympathy."

"Father, I shall wait for the letter, and I will believe what Octave says against all that may appear to condemn him," was the firm response of Joyce.

The letter came the next morning, and aloud to her father Joyce read all that Octave had written her.

It was as follows:

"Until I clear my life of the stain upon me, I dare not call you my own Joyce again, and now I write you my story as it is, for you to be the judge if I am guilty or not guilty, Miss Stapleton."

"I had business calling me to D—, and on the train met the cashier of a bank there, whom I knew slightly."

"He told me that he had been on a special mission for the bank, that he had a large sum of money with him, that he feared the fact was known, and believed that he was 'shadowed.'"

"He also asked me to accompany him to the bank that night, upon arriving in the town, in order that he might deposit the money in the bank vault for safety. I consented to do so."

"Upon reaching our destination it was after midnight, and I went with him to the bank."

"We entered together, and while he made out a list of the various sums, I counted the money for him, and rising, he opened the door of the vault."

"At that moment I received a blow that felled me, half-stunned, from my chair, and but for a sudden movement of mine, and my stiff hat, I would have doubtless been killed by the blow."

"At that same moment I heard a shot, and a groan; then the vault door was closed, and as I staggered to my feet, a man darted by me into the shadow of the bank office and disappeared."

"I was partially dazed by the blow, and stood for a minute not knowing what to do."

"The vault door was closed, and the cashier was within, and dead, I feared, for in falling when shot, he had grasped the inner knob of the door, and drawn it to."

"I gathered up the money readily, and was leaving the bank to go to the police and make my report of the affair, when, as I came out of the bank, I was seized by two officers, who, through the windows, had caught sight of me, having heard the shot, and to my horror I was charged with robbing the bank and murdering the cashier."

"It was useless for me to deny, for my story was not believed, and I am now in prison under the double charge of murder and bank robbery."

"That this fearful stain will be removed from my name is my prayer and hope, but not until that can I come to you to renew the engagement which I now sever. Until I am proven wholly guiltless before the eyes of the world, I shall be as a stranger to you. Only this I must say: If you believe me not guilty, I can face the dread ordeal before me fearlessly."

"I ask only one word from you to say what your verdict is, now that you have heard my version of the unhappy and tragic affair. Is it guilty, or not guilty?"

"I await your response in an agony of suspense, and yet with a heart full of hope."

"OCTAVE ARCHER."

When Joyce Stapleton had read this letter aloud to her father she asked:

"What is your verdict?"

"Guilty, until proven innocent!" was the stern rejoinder.

"And mine is *not* guilty!" in a voice that had no tremor in it, and with a face stamped with a proud resolution.

CHAPTER V. DETECTIVE DANA.

THE Seldon homestead was shrouded in gloom, for the master, respected and beloved by all who knew him, lay in the grand parlors awaiting the last sad rites to be performed over his dead body.

The funeral was to take place the following day, and in his room, denying himself to all who asked to see him in the way of sympathy, was Rudolph Seldon, the heir to the elegant home, of the vast estates and of the large bank-account of his father.

Many said that the heir was broken down with grief, the more because he had not been all that a good son should be to a loving father, and conscience pricked him sorely now that his noble parent had passed away.

But, whether remorse or grief filled his heart, the face of Rudolph Seldon was a study as he kept up his untiring pace to and fro.

The beautiful scene without, of ornamental grounds, lawns, and valleys and hills, caught not his eye as he halted at the window in his walk, for his mind was in a whirl of excitement.

The visit of Doctor Reynolds had unnerved him, and, though in his heart he was guiltless of murder, he yet could not doubt what the physician had told him.

In his own mind he believed that his father had taken his own life to end his sufferings; but did it become known that there was another heir to the large estate and that the will, if not tampered with, left to that other one nearly all of the wealth, then no jury would acquit him when the facts were ascertained that his father really had died of poison.

He dared not face the ordeal of a trial—dared not openly assert that his father was poisoned and declare his innocence, and so he had bought the silence of the impecunious gambler-doctor.

He was fretted terribly, for he did not doubt but that, with him for his banker, the doctor would plunge more deeply than ever into gaming, and thus the secret must be kept, of how his father died, at an enormous and continuous sacrifice.

Then, too, he held another secret, and with the attorney, Ernest Wilber. Would not he, some day, repent of having let him off so easily and demand money?

True, he held a secret against him to compel silence, yet he feared that the attorney might get weak-hearted some day and confess all.

"I would feel safe, and fear nothing were these two men dead—Ross Reynolds and Ernest Wilber."

"Yes, and this other heir—he too stands like a nightmare before me."

"I fear I have work of an unpleasant kind to do, before I shall feel at peace in my inheritance."

Hardly had the words left his lips when a knock came at the door.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said the servant.

"See here, Dorlan, did I not say that I would see no one?" demanded the heir, in a tone of anger.

"You did, sir, but this gentleman is a stranger, who says he must see you."

"That matters not to me. I will not see him, and so say to him."

Dorlan disappeared, but was not gone long before he again presented himself at the door.

"He says, sir, that he has come a long way to see you, and you must see him upon a matter of great importance which admits of no delay."

Rudolph, uttering an oath, said almost savagely:

"Show him into my room then."

The visitor was a young man with a clean-shaven, strongly-marked face, and a form slender, wiry, and indicative of strength and activity.

He was well dressed and dignified in manner and movement. And Rudolph read in those blue eyes that which told him his visitor was not a person to be rude to, or to be frowned down.

"I declined to see you, sir, because my father lies dead in the house, and in my grief I have denied myself to my friends even," said the young man coldly.

"There are persons, Mr. Seldon, whom one cannot be denied to, even in such a case as the present. I have come some distance to see you, so had to insist that I be not refused an audience."

The words were uttered calmly, but with a firmness that was marked.

"Well, sir, as you are here, pray state the nature of your business with me, but permit me to first say that I have not the honor of knowing your name?"

"My name is Dana, sir, and I am a detective!"

The piercing blue eyes of the visitor were upon the man before him, with a look which seemed to read his very soul; but there was no start, no change of color in the young man's

face that was noticeable, while the voice of Rudolph was unmoved as he replied:

"Ah! and why has Detective Dana honored me with a visit, and at such a time?"

"To ask you a few questions, which I hope you will answer, Mr. Seldon."

"To the best of my ability, yes, so pray lose no time in making your queries, Detective Dana."

"I will be brief, sir."

"First, I would know just when you were in the city of D— last?"

"Some three months since."

"Not later?"

"I have answered you, sir."

"Are you acquainted with Ned Norcross, the gambler, of that city?"

"Ah! has he already learned of my father's death and sent you here to see that I have inherited sufficient money to pay him the debt I owe him?"

"You do know Gambler Ned Norcross, then, sir?"

"As you must know, since he has sent you here. To my sorrow, I do know him; he won from me a large sum of money, which I suppose by his sending you to shadow me he fears he will not get."

"Pardon me, sir, but to shadow a man in my profession, is not to make one's self and business known to him as I have to you."

"But may I ask the amount of the gambling debt you owe Gambler Norcross?"

"How are you concerned in it, sir?"

"I will tell you, Mr. Seldon, after you have answered my question."

"Well, sir, it is ten thousand dollars on demand notes, and which I will pay when I am in possession of my inheritance."

"I believe he did make the demand upon you, and gave you a certain time to pay them, or else he would appeal to your father?"

"As Gambler Norcross has made you his confidant, I see no need of my replying, sir."

"And I believe, also, that your father had declared he would wholly cut you off from his fortune, if he knew of your gambling again?"

"See here, Detective Dana, I wish to say to you just this:

"You have intruded yourself upon me in my hour of grief, and come as the spy, it seems, of a gambler to whom I owe ten thousand dollars; but let me tell you that my affairs do not interest you, nor will I permit your interference with me in the slightest particular, so I beg that you will at once relieve me of your presence."

For answer, his visitor calmly arose from the seat which he had taken unasked, and stepping toward him, said:

"Rudolph Seldon, I arrest you for the murder of Cashier Clark, and the robbery of the Bank of D—! Resist and you are a dead man!"

Detective Dick Dana held a revolver in one hand, a pair of handcuffs in the other!

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNSEEN WITNESS.

IN a leafy bower formed by nature, and overhanging a glen that ran down to the edge of a Western river, sat a young girl, book in hand, yet not reading, for her eyes were fixed upon the sun as it neared the western horizon, and upon the scene of beauty spread out before her.

Her form was half-reclining against a large tree that spread its branches around, and which, interlaced with vines, formed the pretty retreat which the maiden had sought as a resting-place, a quiet nook in which to dream, or read.

She was clad in a snowy gown of some soft material, for it was summer-time. A sash of crimson about her waist, a ribbon of the same hue about her neck were her only ornaments, if I except an ivory comb in the waves of her jet-black hair.

Her complexion was dark, yet richly colored, and her teeth were as white as pearls, and shone through lips as red as coral, though a trifle full and passionate.

Eyes large, lustrous and soft as velvet in expression, yet a softness that could burn like fire if aroused by feeling; arched brows plainly marked; a perfect nose, tiny ears, and the description is complete of this child-woman of rarest loveliness.

Not a piece of jewelry did she wear; her dress was plain, but spotless, little shoes of rude manufacture did not hide the beauty of tiny, perfect feet; her hands were shapely and small, with tapering fingers, and nails that were kept with seemingly great care.

Back up the glen, a quarter of a mile away, was an humble home, situated upon the highway leading to the village, a mile distant, and the lands of the little farm ran down to the river's edge.

"How beautiful life must be if it is all like what I have read in books, and how I long to be a queen among women, to make men feel my power as the heroines of these novels do."

"And I believe I can, for from the doctor and the parson to the postmaster and the blacksmith, men respect me and gaze at me strangely."

"Am I, then, so very beautiful as men—yes, and women, too—say I am?"

"I must be, and yet I would make others feel besides these country fools that I come in contact with."

"And thus beautiful, what is my life? Why, to dwell in yonder little home with my mother and two old servants."

"Father, with the brain of a statesman, was content to be a country parson, and leave nothing to be written upon his tombstone but that he was an honest man, while mother, with her moderate income, is content to live here in this secluded spot."

"Oh! how I thirst, how I long for the grand life to be found in the city, where a beautiful woman is a queen— Ah! a boat is landing at the mouth of the glen."

And the beautiful girl, whose ambitious nature was making her dissatisfied with her humble lot in life, turned her gaze upon a small boat that had landed at the place where the glen touched the river.

Four men were in the boat, three of them stylishly dressed, gentlemen in appearance, and the other a waterman from appearance and garb.

They came a short distance up the glen, halting just beneath the leafy bower where the young girl sat. Regarding them earnestly, she did not move from her position, feeling that she was secure from observation.

The boatman carried in his hand a dark, ominous-looking box, which he placed upon the ground in full view of the young lady, whose gaze just then was upon one of the party who stood apart from the others.

He was a handsome young man, but his face was pale and serious, and he idly gazed toward the sunset with a faraway expression on his face which so impressed the fair beholder that she never forgot it.

The other two were also young men, fashionably attired. They were conversing together in a low tone.

One was a man with a face full of intelligence and goodness, and yet it wore a worried look now as he talked to the other, who was the one who particularly caught the eye of the young girl.

He was tall, possessed a physique striking in its manliness and grace, also, while his face was one to see and remember—a face to win love, to excite fear, and yet one that was unfathomable, for it would take a good reader of human nature to say that the man was either evil or good by nature.

His look was one of calm indifference, in contrast with the sad expression of the one companion and the worried countenance of the other.

"It is getting late, so let us have the matter over with, if you both still insist upon killing each other."

And the young man who had particularly attracted the attention of the maiden by the tree threw away a cigar and approached the box which the boatman had placed upon the ground.

"I regret to act for both of you in this matter; but, as you will it so, so must it be, and I'll soon have the weapons ready."

The words fell upon the ear of the young girl and sent a chill to her heart. They could mean but one thing, and the rich tones of the speaker's voice did not take away the ominous significance of what he said.

The girl would have fled, but she seemed fascinated by the scene and unable to move, or even turn her gaze away.

She beheld the box opened and two long pistols taken out and carefully loaded, while the one who so coolly did the work said, as though addressing both:

"You will oblige me by watching all I do."

The sad-faced man half turned, but continued watching the sun go down; the other answered:

"I have perfect confidence in you, Rudolph."

The weapons were loaded; then the ground was stepped off, ten paces, and the two men placed in position.

The second for both of them then gave a weapon to each, and said:

"I will give the order *fire!* then count *one, two, three,* and between *fire* and *three* discharge your weapons."

"But once more I ask you, will you not let this matter end now?"

The sad-faced man shook his head, and the other seemed to feel that this decided the question, and was silent.

So the second appeared to think, also, for he said:

"I am very sorry."

Then, while the boatman, a look of dread upon his face, withdrew to a safe place, fifty feet away, the second took his stand on one side, but between the two duelists, and his voice rung sharply as he said:

"Are you ready?"

A bow answered, for neither spoke.

"Fire! one! two! three!"

The last word was upon the lips of the second before a trigger was pulled.

Then there came a sharp report; the sad-

facéd man staggered backward, waved his arms wildly and fell, involuntarily pulling the trigger as he did so.

"Curse him! he has shot me!" came sharply from the second, as he placed his hand upon his arm, where the bullet of the fallen man had cut its way.

"And I have killed him!"

"God forgive me and have mercy upon that poor boy!" came in anguished accents from the lips of the duelist who had fired the death-shot.

"He is not dead, for I heard him moan," he continued, as he sprang toward the prostrate form.

But he was dead, for the moan had come from the lips of the young girl by the tree above, as she sunk into a swoon.

And, lying there unconscious, she heard not the second say:

"He is dead, and you must let his body over into the river as you row back to the town. Remember, this is to be a dead secret between us, for the boatman is paid to keep silence."

"It will be known to us only what his fate was."

"Hasten! Carry him to the boat, and I will seek yonder farm-house and drive to the village to see a doctor, for the wound he gave me as he fell, may be serious."

"Good-by, and expect to see me in a few days, but keep the secret, or you will hang for this, and that man and myself go to prison."

He turned away as he spoke, when the man who had fired the fatal shot and the boatman carried the body to the boat.

The young girl recovered consciousness as they reached the boat; she saw them enter it and row away, and discovered that one man of the party was not there.

Night was coming on, and she staggered to her feet faint and frightened.

Along the ridge she went until she reached her little home, the paleness of her face not noted in the twilight by a handsome woman of forty who met her at the door and called out:

"Quick, Di, for a gentleman is here, wounded by the accidental discharge of his pistol. I have taken him to the spare room and sent Tom to the village for Doctor Harrow."

"Has he shot himself?" gasped the young girl as she entered the house.

"Yes, so he told me; he was rowing on the river, landed to shoot a bird, and the pistol went off by accident and wounded him in the arm."

"That man has told an utter falsehood; but I will not betray him, but wait," muttered Di to herself as she followed her mother to the pretty spare room where the handsome stranger had been installed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CLAWS OF A DOVE.

A LIVERIED servant was lounging lazily in front of a handsome mansion, in the city of Chicago, known as "Bachelors' Hall," for within its sacred portals only men were allowed.

It was the home of a score or more of fashionable young men-about town, where they had their suites of rooms, an excellent *cuisine*, and all the luxuries that wealth could buy.

"Is Mr. Rudolph Seldon in?"

The flunky started, as he beheld before him a vision of feminine loveliness that quite took his breath away.

She was grandly beautiful, dressed in the height of fashion, though with perfect taste, and her large black eyes looked squarely into the face of the man, who stammered forth:

"Yes—miss—I mean madam—I mean no, madam."

"You mean that he is in, and you do not wish me to know it, as ladies do not call on gentlemen here."

"No, miss, he is not in."

"You are mistaken, for I know that he entered this house a quarter of an hour ago, so say that I would see him."

The manner of the beautiful woman forced the servant to obey, and he asked, politely:

"Your name, please, miss?"

"It matters not. Say simply that a lady desires to see him."

The man ushered the fair visitor into the small but luxurious parlors of Bachelors' Hall, and went on his errand, to soon return with the reply that:

"Mr. Seldon will see you, miss, so I will show you to his parlor."

It was a luxurious room, the parlor of Rudolph Seldon, and, in fact, his suite of five rooms seemed too elegant for a bachelor.

The carpets were soft as velvet, the walls beautifully papered and the ceilings frescoed in artistic designs, while the furniture was very elegant.

There was a book-case of rare works, a piano, foils, boxing-gloves and paintings, with several fine pieces of marble.

Innumerable *bric à brac* were scattered about, and at one side of the center table, in a lounging-chair and in silk dressing-gown, embroidered slippers and fancy smoking-cap, sat the young master of the pretty rooms.

The door was opened by the man in livery, and closed behind the caller, while Rudolph

Seldon arose to greet his visitor, wondering at her presence there.

She had lowered a heavy veil as she followed the servant, so her face was not visible, and Rudolph bowed in his courtly way, and said:

"May I know who it is that has honored me with a visit?"

She threw herself gracefully into a chair, and as she removed her veil, said, coldly:

"I am one who has a right to visit you, Rudolph."

"My God! Di, you here?" and the man started back, paling perceptibly.

"Yes, your wife, Rudolph, has come to visit you."

The man had regained his composure at once, and turning to a cigar-case, took a weed and lighted it; then he resumed his seat, and said in an indifferent way:

"I cannot say that you are welcome, Di."

"I did not expect you to go into an ecstasy of joy at sight of me, Rudolph; but I was tired of your numerous falsehoods, for such were your letters, so came."

"Did you receive my last letter?" he asked, dryly.

"When written?"

"About ten days ago."

"Yes."

"Well, you understand that we are nothing to each other now."

"I do not so understand it, Rudolph."

"Then you did not receive the letter I wrote to you regarding the—well, I may as well say it—wrong I did you?"

"Oh, yes; I read it all, how you had loved me, so dearly, after my having nursed you back to life when you came to my home, wounded, and had an attack of brain-fever, that you could not give me up, and, as you had vowed to your father never to marry other than the one he selected for your wife, you had decided to secretly bind me to you and try and arrange for a public marriage afterward."

"You received the letter, I see."

And the man sneered.

"I told you that I did."

"And still you come here, after I assured you that it was a bogus marriage I entered into with you?"

"Yes, I have come."

"I may as well, as you are here to force me to speak plainly, tell you that I did hope to one day make you my wife before the world, and, to prevent your loving another, I contracted a mock marriage with you."

"But I since have found that my father has selected a wife for me, and, unless I marry her, he will utterly cast me off without a dollar."

"I tried to reason with him, but it was of no use, for he was firm, and as he is now dying with consumption I had to yield. I do not believe that he can live more than a couple of weeks. To-day I had a call to his bedside and shall leave for my home at midnight."

The woman never changed her expression while the man talked, but when he had finished and, seemingly, in his own mind, had convinced her that all was as he said, she answered in her rich voice:

"My dear Rudolph, I understand you, so you must now understand me."

"I have in vain tried to do so."

"Well, let me say that three years ago I was an innocent girl of seventeen living with my mother, and I confess I was not happy, for I had ambition far beyond my station in life."

"One day you came to our little home wounded and suffering, and said that you had landed from your boat to fire at a bird of rare plumage, that your pistol had been accidentally discharged and the bullet had passed through your arm."

"It was a worse wound than you had believed; fever followed; I was your nurse, and I learned to love you, while you vowed that you were my very slave."

"You gave your name as Rudolph Ramsdell, and my mother believed such was your name; but I doubted you."

"And why?"

"Well, your handkerchiefs had the letters R. S. marked in them and your watch a monogram of the same letters, was one reason; but, more, I knew that your story about accidentally wounding yourself was false."

"Ha! you doubt it?"

"I knew that you deliberately lied."

"Di Delmar, beware!"

"Do not get excited, Rudolph, for it will do no good."

"I know what I say, for I was in the arbor in the glen, where you told me of your love, when you and three others landed from a boat, and—I saw all!"

"Great God! you saw that duel?"

"Yes, I saw and heard all, and so, when I went to the house and found you there, and heard what you had told my mother, I knew that you had been guilty of a grave crime."

"It was a fair duel, and—"

"Oh, yes, in its way, but then, the law of that State sends one to prison for engaging in a duel, and more, the one your friend killed was supposed to have been lost, no one knowing his fate."

"Well, doubting you, I yet loved you, and when you, one day, came back and asked me to marry you secretly, I consented, appointing a day that would give me time to see what you intended to do.

"I had a few hundred dollars of my own; so I came to the city after you and placed a detective on your track, for I then discovered who you were, that you were Rudolph Seldon, not Rudolph Ramsdell.

"I found out, through the detective, that you had engaged a bogus preacher to pretend to marry you to me. So I saw the man, doubled the sum you paid him to play the part of a clergyman, and got him to find one who was a regularly-ordained minister to take his place, he pleading sickness.

"And so, Rudolph, my husband, you brought a clergyman with you, when you came to the village where I met you, and I handed to him a note telling him the truth, and giving him our real names for him to enter, which he did, and so, Mr. Bachelor, I am really Mrs. Rudolph Seldon, *née* Di Delmar," and the beautiful woman broke out into ringing, musical laughter, while the man, with a half-uttered oath, sprung to his feet as he cried:

"It is a lie! You are not my wife!"

"Oh, yes, for I have my marriage-certificate, and will give you the address of the clergyman in this very city who married us. I was ambitious, Rudolph, and sought to rise through you; but, you deceived me, kept me in the country, except when you would take me travelling with you, and would not acknowledge me as your wife to your father.

"My mother knew the truth, so is not deceived by you. I have found out that you are a gambler, terribly in debt, and that you are only waiting for your father to die to get a large fortune.

"I know that he has no one in view for you to marry, and that you are false to man and woman alike.

"But, your father is on his deathbed, as I know, for I have used the money you sent me at times, to have a detective shadow you, and, disguised as a youth, an old woman, and in other ways, I, too, have shadowed you and know you thoroughly.

"Now, Rudolph, let me say that I shall return home, while you go to your dying father; but when he is laid in his grave, you must come for me and publicly acknowledge me as your wife, for I shall carry out the dreams of my girlhood and make men my abject worshippers.

"You need not be jealous, for I hate men, after knowing you as I do; but I shall live like a queen on your money, I pledge you, husband mine."

"And if I refuse?" the man said, in a voice hoarse with passion.

"Then, sir, I shall charge you with the murder of Raoul Ford, for such was his name, and swear that it was you who killed him, for the man that did the deed will not put his neck in the noose by confessing it, and your wound, received in the duel, you know, will bear me out, as will also my mother's testimony, your doctor's, and our farm-hands, who saw you at Glen Cottage, our little home," and again the woman laughed in her musical way, while the face of the man she had shadowed grew livid with rage and fear combined.

It was a minute before he could utter a word, and then he said:

"I defy you, Di Delmar!"

"So be it. Your sweet Dove, as you called me for a pet name, will show you that she has claws that can wound deep, when revenge is the stake she plays for!

"Good-afternoon, Rudolph, and remember, when next we meet you will be behind prison bars."

She turned to leave the room, when he sprung toward her and said:

"Hold! I yield, Di Delmar!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A FAIR PLOTTER.

JOYCE STAPLETON had said that she believed her lover, Octave Archer, to be "not guilty" of the charge of murder and robbery, but her father apparently could not think the same, after he had carefully considered the evidence brought to bear, of his guilt.

Mr. Stapleton greatly admired the plucky young man who had saved him and his daughter from the road-agents, and, under the guise of a clergyman, had proven himself to be a man dangerous to arouse to anger.

He had found him such splendid company, so true at heart, and had formed such an attachment for him that he had never pressed him with questions of his past.

That Octave Archer was a man with a history was evident to the observing old gentleman, but he was so silent as to his past that it was a trifle mysterious.

But, here came facts that could not be disputed, and that was the murder of the bank cashier and the finding of Octave there with the money stolen in his possession.

Then, too, it had come to Mr. Stapleton that

his expectant son-in-law had met with financial reverses of late and had been in need of money.

So it was that Mr. Stapleton believed Octave Archer guilty, though it cut him to the heart to think so, not only on account of his hitherto high regard for the young man, but for his daughter's love for him.

"She must love him as few women love if she can see his innocence against such facts. Even his own letter admits all and proves nothing in his favor," argued Mr. Stapleton, with himself.

But Joyce did believe her lover innocent, and was determined that he should so understand.

The day after his letter was received she waited until her father had gone down-town; then putting on her bonnet she went out to make a visit.

She stopped at a small cottage in the outskirts of the city and was met at the door by a large, middle-aged woman with a kindly face.

"Come in, dear Miss Stapleton, for you look pale and worried," she said.

And Joyce, entering, took the comfortable seat placed for her.

"I am worried, Mrs. Burns, and I have come to you for help. Are we alone?"

"Yes, dear, for the children are away at school; but how can I help you, Miss Joyce, for glad am I to do so after all your kindness to me?"

"You told me that your son was in jail in D—, and when his trial comes off he will be found guilty with those whom he was found among, but that he was not one of the counterfeiters they had accused him of being?"

"It is so, miss, for I heard them trying to get him to join them, and he would not. You see, he is a fine steel-engraver, and they got him to do some work for them, he thinking they were Government officers; but he found out they were counterfeiters, and went to them to get his pay and decided to have nothing more to do with them.

"It was then he was arrested, while with them, and the tools and counterfeit plates were found in his room; so he will go to prison when he intended no wrong, and is now pining in jail awaiting his trial."

"You went down to D— to see him, I believe?"

"Yes, Miss Joyce, and the poor boy's heart is almost broken."

"You told me that you knew the night guard of the jail, and that you could get him to let your son escape, if you had a large sum to pay him?"

"I know it, Miss Joyce, for the man is one I have known since he was a boy. A slippery fellow he is, and how he got the place he has I don't know.

"I went to see him and asked him if he could help my boy, and he said he might, if I paid enough to tempt him."

"Did he say how much he wanted?"

"He hinted that he was tired of playing jailer, and five thousand dollars would set him up in another country."

"You said that your son had a desire to go to Texas and become a ranchero, I believe?"

"Yes, Miss Joyce. When he made money enough he intended going, and then to send for me and his little brothers and sister; but all we have is this little house, so far. I tried to sell it to get the money to pay Barney for letting Howard escape, only I could get but two thousand for it."

"Now, Mrs. Burns, I have a plan to propose to you. It is this:

"I have a friend who is in jail, in D—, the same place where your son is. I feel—indeed, I know—that he is not guilty of the crimes he is charged with. In jail he cannot prove his innocence, but if he is free I believe that he can.

"If he awaits his trial, it can end but one way, for all proof of guilt is upon him, it seems, and that which he is accused of will hang him."

"Oh, Miss Joyce!"

"Now as you know that this man, who is the night guard of the D— jail, can be bribed, I wish you to do me a great favor and yourself one at the same time.

"First, I will pay you two thousand dollars for your place here, so that you can leave town, and get beyond the reach of those who might come here to look for your son when he escapes."

"Oh, Miss Joyce!"

"Then you are to go to D— and see this guard, offering him five thousand dollars if—"

"But I have not the money, Miss Joyce."

"I have it, or will have it for you. In bank I have several thousands saved up, and from that I will pay you for your house; then I will meet you in Chicago, ten days from now, and give you ten thousand dollars more. Out of this you are to pay the guard his price, and for it he is to release your son and the one I spoke of."

"You are to give your son two thousand dollars with which, and what you will have from the sale of your home, you can make a start in Texas, and properly disguised, there is no reason why he should not find a safe retreat."

"Oh, he can do so, Miss Joyce! But can you mean to spend so much money as you say?"

"Yes, and I will have it for you when we meet in Chicago."

"But will your father give it to you?" and Mrs. Burns was still dubious, for, though she knew Joyce was an heiress, she was aware that ten thousand dollars was a large sum to raise, at least for a young girl.

"I shall not depend upon my father for it, as he would not help me if he knew what I wanted it for; but I will get the money, if you say you will carry out my plot, Mrs. Burns, and save your son from prison, and the one I spoke of from the gallows!"

"I will carry out your plans to the letter, Miss Joyce, and, maybe, we will not have to spend so much money."

"If needed, I will get even more, for my plan must not fail, remember."

"It shall not, for where a mother works to save a son from prison, she can do much, Miss Joyce."

"I believe you, and when I work to save one I love from the gallows, I will not fail," was the brave girl's response.

CHAPTER IX.

PLEGDED.

LEVI GOLDBERG was a man of business, and never allowed an opportunity to pass to do a stroke in his own behalf.

That he was a Hebrew went without saying, once one had seen him, and he was by no means prepossessing in appearance.

His shop was small and dingy, looking to be a very poor affair, and yet, in the rear, was a warehouse with a fortune in second-hand goods.

His shop was on a business street in Chicago, and in an arm-chair at the door Mr. Levi Goldberg sat all day, lying in ambush for any one who might pass by.

He had the appearance of being asleep, but really was very wide-awake, and as his eyes fell upon a graceful form and veiled face approaching his shop, he sprung to his feet with alacrity.

"My tear, vill you walk in and buys some-dings to-day?" he urged.

The one he addressed hesitated, then stepped into the dingy shop, and said in a low tone:

"I was looking for a place advertised as a loan office, and I believe this is it?"

"Yes, mish, dis vas t'er place," replied Levi.

"You lend money on jewels here, I believe?"

"I vas t'er mans, mish."

"I desire quite a large sum, and to borrow on jewelry, for a year's time, with promise of renewal by payment of interest, and also to take them out if I can do so before the specified time."

"Yes, mish, it vas all right."

"Haf you t'er jewels mit you?"

"Yes," and she took from beneath her cloak a leather case and placed it upon the counter, opening it with a key.

"Mine gracious!" cried Mr. Levi Goldberg, as he beheld the glittering array of jewelry spread before his eyes.

"These are valuables, sir, I am most anxious to preserve, for some of them are heirlooms in my family, and they belonged to those most dear to me, but who are now dead."

"These are the ones to which I refer, while these others are late gifts to me, which I would not lose for a fortune."

"They vas so safe mit me, miss, as never vas; but, v'ot you vants on dese beautiful t'ings?"

And Levi Goldberg was really delighted at the display, for there was an antique necklace of pearls and another of diamonds.

A comb set with diamonds, bracelets, earrings, breastpins and finger-rings, all of exquisite stones, rubies, emeralds, diamonds and pearls, a fortune in themselves.

"I wish ten thousand dollars, sir, with the privilege, if I need five thousand more in a day or two, to come and get it."

"Mine gracious, young leddies!" And Levi Goldberg in vain tried to pierce the veil and discover if his patron was young. "It was mooch monies—so mooch monies you vants."

"If it is more than you can afford, sir, I will go elsewhere."

"No, no; don't do dat, for I has t'e sums; only maybe you don't vant so mooch."

"I wish just the sum named, sir, with the privilege I referred to."

"I vill see if dey vas all right."

"If you know your business, sir, a glance is sufficient to show you that I am offering you security worth five times the amount received."

This was a blow at Mr. Levi Goldberg, who flattered himself that he did know his business as no one else knew it, and he ventured to say:

"Oh, yes; I sees t'e values of t'e jewelry, but, vas dey all right?"

And Mr. Goldberg smiled at his hit back.

"You mean are they stolen, I suppose?"

"Yes, mish."

"I can give you proof, sir, that they are mine, if necessary; but I prefer not to be known in the transaction, if I can avoid it."

"I guess it vas all right, mish, and I lets you haf t'e monish."

"Thank you. Here is a list of just what the

case contains, so see that it is correct, lock it, and give me the key."

"You was a pizziness vomans, mish."

And Levi Goldberg admired the one he complimented, though he would have preferred to keep the key himself.

So he took the case, locked it, handed over the key and wrote out his check for the amount, giving also a contract to return the goods on demand for the sum loaned and interest, which latter, it is needless to say, was usury.

Taking the check, the veiled visitor left the dingy shop and wended her way to the bank, where she got the money, and then, calling a carriage, drove to the Tremont House.

"Find out if Mrs. Howard Burns is stopping here, and, if so, ask her if she will see Miss Stapleton," she said, to the man at the ladies' entrance.

Five minutes after she was ushered into a pleasant room where Mrs. Burns was nervously pacing the floor.

"Ah, Miss Joyce! I am so glad you have come! I was not expecting you so soon."

"I got away sooner than I expected from home, Mrs. Burns; but, you have been to D—?"

"Yes, and have made a bargain with Barney to release both Howard and Mr. Archer, one week from to-night, and I gave him one thousand dollars down."

"That was right; and how much more will there be to pay him?"

"Four thousand, for he demanded five thousand—no less."

"I have it for you; but you have your young children safe?"

"Oh, yes, miss, and I will go to them as soon as Howard is free, and he can make his way to Texas, where I will join him; but, to be certain I am not followed, I will go to New York, as you suggested, and sail from there to Havana, and then to Galveston."

"It would be best; but, here are the two thousand dollars for your son, and the amount for the man, Barney."

"Miss Joyce, some day my son will return you this money," said Mrs. Burns with deep feeling.

"I do not ask it, for, if successful, it is worth the investment."

"And here, Mrs. Burns, is a package which I wish you to give to Barney for Mr. Archer. He will understand it, I hope."

"Now I must hurry away, for you know I came to Chicago nominally to visit an old school friend for a week, but I have not yet gone to her home, as I wished to get this matter off my hands first."

"Now let me once more read over what I have written. Then I will seal the package and give it to you, and I suppose you will return to D—to-night?"

"Yes, Miss Joyce; I shall go by the first train."

Joyce Stapleton took from her sachel a package, and going to the window, as though for better light, but in reality to hide her emotion, read the letter she had written and which was as follows:

"CHICAGO, Ill. Nov. 10, 18—.

"OCTAVE:—I read your letter with feelings I cannot express, and though my heart is full of grief for you, there is not in it one shadow of doubt of you."

"I believe what you have said—that you are innocent. I read it aloud to my father and asked his verdict upon it."

"His reply was that all circumstances pointed to your guilt, and he must believe you guilty until you are proven wholly guiltless."

"I told him that my verdict, in spite of the seeming proof, was *not* guilty, and what I do now is for you to be able to prove to me, to my father and to the world your innocence."

"Locked up in prison you have the brand of infamy upon you, and are utterly unable to remove it; but free, you can take steps to prove that you are false y accused—to find the guilty wretch who committed the crime for which you are incarcerated."

"Will you do this for your sake, for mine, dear? I feel that you will, Octave—still my beloved—and so I have arranged to set you free."

"I know that you are not well off as to money; so I take the liberty of sending herewith twenty-five hundred dollars, which will be the foundation upon which you build up your innocence."

"A fugitive from justice, or rather from the law, as you will be, you cannot negotiate what property you may have, and so you must accept the *richin*, as it is intended—my contribution to the cause of truth."

"I shall feel that you are laboring to free yourself of the brand put upon you, and I shall hope to have you come, some day, and bring me the proof that you are innocent."

"Do not write to me. Your accepting your freedom through me will be proof that you have undertaken the task I set for you to accomplish."

"When you have accomplished it, and *only then*, come to me."

JOYCE STAPLETON."

The eyes were filled with tears as she finished reading her letter to the man she loved, the man then in jail under a charge that would send him to the gallows, and she seemed for a moment as though she was about to break down.

But, controlling herself, she placed the money in the package, sealed it and gave it to the wo-

man so allied to her in similar bonds of grief and sympathy.

Soon after, Mrs. Burns was on her way to D—, and, as Joyce Stapleton was surrounded that night by an admiring throng, in the elegant home of her school friend, whom she had visited as an excuse to get to Chicago, not one suspected the shadow upon her spirit, for the smiles upon her beautiful face hid the heavy grief within her heart.

CHAPTER X.

NOT PROVEN.

WHEN Rudolph Seldon found himself at the mercy of Detective Dick Dana, he stood like one who had been suddenly transfixed into stone.

His eyes did not even move in their sockets, nor was there a tremor on his lips.

Before him stood the detective, a pair of handcuffs in one hand, a cocked revolver in the other, and the muzzle covering his heart.

It was a striking tableau, and an awful one to the accused man.

"For the murder of Cashier Clark of the Bank of D—?"

The words broke almost like a sob from the white lips of the heir, and full half a minute after the detective had made his accusation and threat.

"Yes, you are the man I seek for that murder and robbery," was the reply of Dana.

"My God! why do you accuse me?"

"Because where all others believe another man guilty, one Octave Archer, and everything points to his guilt, I take a different view."

"I looked the field over carefully, and though Mr. Octave Archer is now in jail, awaiting trial, I am the only one who does not believe him guilty, and I have formed the opinion that you murdered Cashier Clark and robbed the bank."

"It is false! false in every particular, and you shall suffer for daring to make this accusation against me!"

"Mr. Seldon, I am one to stand by my acts. I have not formed the idea that the accused man is innocent, without just reasons, and that you are the guilty one I think I can prove; hence I have dogged your steps and now am here to arrest you."

"I regret, of course, to come at such a time, with the body of your father lying dead in your home; but I must do my duty and arrest you, and if you resist I shall have to kill you."

The sweat stood in beads upon the face of Rudolph Seldon; he seemed not to know what to say or do, but at length asked, his voice hoarse and quivering:

"Do you alone accuse me of this murder?"

"Yes, sir, alone."

"Does no one know of your suspicion against me?"

"No one, sir; it is my own particular case."

"You are known to no one here as a detective?"

"Not to a soul."

"Well, Detective Dana, I will make terms with you."

"I am not to be bribed, sir."

"Not if I pay your price?"

"I have no price, sir."

"Bah! Every man has—yes, and woman, too, in my experience. I will tell you what I will do," and Rudolph, with an effort, got perfect command of himself once more.

"Well, sir?" asked the detective, quietly, yet did not fail to keep his prisoner under cover of the weapon in his hand.

"I will give you five thousand dollars if you will remain at my house, apparently as an old friend and my guest, and not as a detective. You are to let no one suspect that you are other than I wish you to appear."

"When my father has been consigned to the grave, then I will go with you to parties who will prove an *alibi* for me, and show, to your satisfaction, that you are wrong in accusing me of this murder and robbery. If you are satisfied, you are to let me go free and have no publicity of the affair. If you are not satisfied, then you are to take me to D—and let me face the ordeal; but, mark my words, Detective Dana, and I make no idle threat, I will pay you as I said, for this leniency, but I will kill you when I have proven I am guiltless, if you force me before the public as a murderer and a thief."

"I accept your terms, Mr. Seldon," was the cool reply of the detective, and he added: "I know that you are the heir, here, to a large fortune, which you would hate to give up; but life is dearer to most men than gold, and you are one of those men. You may seek to escape me; but the moment you do, you shall die!"

"I will appear as your guest here, but I am to be constantly with you, and when the burial is over, I will go with you to those by whom you wish to prove an *alibi*."

"If I am convinced that I have wronged you, then I set you free; but if not convinced, you are my prisoner and go in irons under my charge to D—."

"If you *there* prove your innocence, then, sir,

I am to consider it your life or mine. Am I right, sir?"

"You are; but, you are to pledge yourself to make known to no one this charge against me?"

"I will so pledge myself, sir."

"Enough! I trust you, and you must trust me, to a certain extent."

Rudolph rang the bell for a servant, who soon appeared.

"Dorlan, show this gentleman to the east wing rooms, for he is to be my guest, and see that he wants for nothing."

Detective Dana followed Dorlan to the rooms assigned, and not one who knew of his presence there dreamed of the reason for his coming.

The next day all that was mortal of the noble old master of the mansion was consigned to the tomb, and, as the son and heir stood with bowed head and pale face at the grave, by his side stood Detective Dana, seemingly his most sympathetic friend.

And there, too, were Ernest Wilber, attorney-at-law, and Doctor Ross Reynolds, also bound to Rudolph Seldon by a strange tie, one that could not readily be severed.

Back to the lordly house went the heir, and with him were Lawyer Wilber and the detective.

In the elegant library Ernest Wilber read the will—the will which he had been forced, through fear, to change, leaving to Rudolph Seldon the vast estate of his father, and, among other minor legacies, one of fifty thousand dollars to the one who had been intended by the dead millionaire as his real heir.

That night Rudolph Seldon slept in the elegant home as its master, and the next day he departed, with his "shadow" at his side, to prove that he was not guilty of murder and robbery.

"Well, sir, I hope you are satisfied?" and Rudolph Seldon turned to Detective Dana, as the two came out of a handsome residence in Chicago, the second day after leaving his home.

"No, Mr. Seldon, I am not, for, when I might have believed the testimony of the gentleman whom we just left, that you were his guest on the night on which Cashier Clark was murdered in D—, I know that he simply told me what you had written him to say!"

"I had written him to say?"

"Yes, for upon his table I saw an open letter, and a glance showed me your name signed to it, while another glance showed me the words:

"It is a case of life and death, and I beg you to swear that I was your guest, on the night I refer to, when the party accompanies me to your home, and so post others of your household for my sake, and I will explain all afterward to your satisfaction."

"What was on the other page I do not know, but that much I read, and your name was signed to it, so, Mr. Seldon, you are my prisoner."

Quick as a flash the detective seized the hands of Rudolph Seldon, and, ere he could resist, steel manacles were snapped upon his wrists.

CHAPTER XI.

REVEALED BY A GLASS.

"I AM at your mercy, Detective Dana, so can but yield gracefully," said Rudolph Seldon, who was certainly taken aback by the lightning-like act of the detective in putting the irons upon him.

He had taken him to the home of friends, whom he had written to, as has been seen, to prove an *alibi* for him, and promised to explain afterward the reason why, for he did not doubt but that he could make a satisfactory explanation to those who knew him so well.

But for the fact of seeing the letter, which the recipient had left upon his writing desk, opened, the detective might have believed the story of those who were to prove the presence with them of Seldon the night of the murder of Cashier Clark and the robbery of the bank.

But, Dana's keen eyes caught sight of the signature of his prisoner, for such he now was, and he read enough to prove that the letter had been expressly written as part of the conspiracy to have his friends declare that Rudolph was their guest on the night in question.

But, Detective Dick Dana was no ordinary man, and even with the evidence in favor of the prisoner, he would have shadowed him until he had more proof for or against him.

"It is wise of you to surrender gracefully, Mr. Seldon, when you assert your innocence, and which you claim you can prove, rather than to resist and cause your certain death, for I am not a man to trifle with," said Detective Dana, in answer to the words of Seldon.

That the latter was deeply cut at being so cleverly ironed, in the moment of his hope that he would be set free, there was no doubt, but his was a spirit to quickly rally, and he said:

"Dana, I still assert my innocence, and I wish you to still be lenient with me. You accuse me of murder and robbery, or attempt to rob, and I say I am *not* guilty."

"Now I am unarmed, and I pledge you I will make no effort to escape, nor will I go three feet from your side, if you will set me free again."

"You are armed, and if I should attempt to escape, can kill me; but, I wish not to be seen as a prisoner until all hope of avoiding a trial is over."

"When I must face the ordeal, when you are convinced against all proofs I may give, that I am what you accuse me of being, then I will yield and meet my fate; but, until then, relieve me of these irons."

"I know we are all liable to err, Mr. Seldon, and I may be wrong, but I do not believe that I am; still, as I would not wish to wrong you, I will let you go free of the irons, but with the warning that I will kill you at the first effort to escape."

"Now we will go to the hotel and catch the early train for D—. So I will unlock your irons."

Rudolph held out his hands. The detective removed the manacles, and the two walked on side by side to the hotel.

They were given a room together, and leaving word to be called for the early train, the detective said:

"Lie down and get what rest you can, for I shall not retire, but sit in this easy-chair."

Seldon made no reply, but, half-undressing, he threw himself upon the bed, and was soon, to appearances, fast asleep.

Defective Dana lay back in the comfortable chair, his feet to the fire, for the night was chilly, and he seemed to be lost in deep reverie; but at last, his eyes closed, and his loud, measured breathing told that he was asleep.

Thus an hour went by, and the fire was burning low when the form on the bed arose stealthily and stood upright.

He took from a pocket in his coat a small bottle and from another a large handkerchief.

Drawing the stopper he saturated the handkerchief with the contents of the bottle, and then, as silently as a cat could have moved, crept toward the sleeping detective.

Approaching the rear of the chair the prisoner bent over and brought the handkerchief around in front of the face of Detective Dana.

There he held it close to his nose, and soon again wet the handkerchief from the bottle.

The detective's head dropped forward, then he fell from the chair to the floor.

"Now!" said Rudolph Seldon aloud, and he turned quickly to dress himself.

But, as his back was turned toward Detective Dana, he failed to see that gentleman rise noiselessly and quickly, and glide toward him.

Suddenly he turned and a cry broke from his lips as he saw the muzzle of a revolver looking squarely into his eyes.

"Hold out your hands, sir!" and the eyes of the detective flashed dangerously.

"Curse you! I thought you were unconscious from chloroform!" said Rudolph Seldon, coolly, quickly regaining his composure.

"Hold out your hands, quick, or take the consequences!"

"What will be the consequences?"

"Sudden and certain death."

"I prefer to live." The hands were held out and with a quick movement the detective clapped the irons upon them.

"Now, Mr. Seldon, I know what you are, when I merely suspected before. I was not asleep. I had an idea you would play me a game of slip, but I did not think you would wish to kill me. I pretended to be asleep, and, as I have the happy faculty of holding my breath for a long time, I did so when you held the handkerchief saturated with chloroform to my nose."

"Now, sir, I will see that you go to D— with me, and it will be a very dangerous undertaking for you to offer any resistance."

Defective Dana spoke very quietly, but Rudolph Seldon well realized that it would be madness to attempt to trifle further with the officer.

"You can go to bed, sir, again, and this time I shall have no fear, so can sleep myself," and, locking the door he put the key in his pocket.

Then he resumed his seat in the easy-chair, while Rudolph remained standing like a statue by the table.

"Do you see that glass, Mr. Seldon?" and Detective Dana pointed to a large mirror before him.

"I see it."

"Well, it revealed to me your every act, though my eyes were half-closed. Always be careful to note your surroundings before you undertake any act that you do not wish to be caught in."

The prisoner, with a muttered oath, threw himself upon the bed, and was, seemingly, soon fast asleep, in spite of his danger and disgrace.

He had, as the detective had said he was a poor man, bargained with Dana for certain liberties by the payment of five thousand dollars, or rather the promise to pay it. Now, on the morrow, he would see what he could do to bribe him to let him go.

The bank and the town of D— would doubtless be willing to pay a handsome sum for the capture of the man who was guilty of the murder and attempted robbery, if the man, Octave Archer, who was then in prison, was proven to

be innocent, and of course this sum would go to Detective Dana.

But, though he declared that he was guiltless of the crime, might it not be hard to prove his innocence, and was it not worth much to keep from the publicity of the charge?

So he thought, as he lay on the bed, and, having been the heir, according to his father's will, of so vast a fortune, was it not worth almost any sum to escape?

He so considered, and decided to offer the detective an amount that would surely tempt him.

"Are you asleep?" he at length asked.

"No. I am very wide awake."

"I'll tell you what I will do."

"Well?"

"You said you were a poor man?"

"Yes."

"You allowed me certain liberties for five thousand dollars."

"To be paid, yes."

"Now does any one other than yourself suspect me of this murder?"

"Not a soul, yet."

"What do you mean by yet?"

"That I alone suspect you now."

"You have told no one?"

"Not yet."

"You heard my father's will read?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will ask you to go home with me and remain there until I get full possession of my property, and then I will pay you fifty thousand dollars in cash if you will keep your suspicions to yourself and let me go free."

"There is one thing in the way of my accepting."

"What is that?"

"My honor," was the cool reply, and soon after Detective Dana arose and said:

"Come, it is time to get ready to take the early train."

"You will remove these handcuffs?"

"Not until I reach D—, but I will remove one and fasten it upon my own wrist, for there is no escape for you, Mr. Seldon."

"You are the man that killed Cashier Clark, and if you do not hang for it, an innocent man will be the victim. Come!"

And, ironed together, the two men soon after left the room and took a carriage for the railroad station.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEVERED HAND.

DASHING along through storm and darkness, the midnight Express was rushing toward D— at the rate of forty miles an hour.

It was a long train and many hundreds of travelers were on board, yet not one seemed to be in dread of death, so confident did they feel that all was safe in spite of the darkness, the storm and the speed with which the flying engine was dragging the cars along.

In one of the state-rooms of the palace-car sat two men, and while one was reading a paper the other sat in gloomy meditation.

Suddenly the one who was reading started and said:

"Ah! here is news."

"What is it?" was the sullen query of the other.

"If you will raise your hand so that I can hold the paper the better to the light, I will read it."

"It is not pleasant to be limited in action, is it?" and the speaker glanced at his left hand, which was connected by steel manacles to the right hand of his companion.

"You can make yourself more comfortable, and me, too, by unlocking these irons."

"Yes, and get my throat cut for my pains, for I saw you slip that carving-knife at the restaurant where we dined into your pocket."

"Curse your eyes, Detective Dana!"

"I rather say bless them; but to my news."

"Well?"

"The prisoner has escaped."

"What prisoner?"

"The one who is accused of the murder of Cashier Clark."

It was the other's turn to start now, and he said, excitedly:

"Quick! read it to me!"

Placing the newspaper so that the light fell more brightly upon it, the detective read aloud, for the train had come to a standstill, delayed at a station from some cause, as follows:

"A TRAITOR GUARD!"

"THE ESCAPE OF TWO PRISONERS"

"CASHIER CLARK'S MURDERER FREE!"

"We regret to inform our readers that the murderer of Cashier Clark, our lamented townsman, and the robber of the Bank of D— escaped last night from his cell in the city prison along with Howard Burns, another prisoner, and they are now, we fear, beyond all hope of being recaptured, so well was the plot arranged by the aid of a treacherous guard."

"Henry Barney, the guard in question, is the night-watchman of the city jail, and heretofore he has borne a good reputation."

"But it is supposed that the murderer, Octave Archer, must have had secreted about him a large

sum of money and tempted him with it, for no other reason can be assigned for his not only allowing his escape, but also accompanying him."

"The cause of his taking Howard Burns with them also cannot even be guessed at, for he certainly was too poor to offer a bribe."

"This morning when the jailer went on duty he found that Barney was missing and a thorough search revealed the fact that he had left the jail."

"Going to see if the prisoners were all in their cells, Jailer Dale discovered that the murderer Archer, and Howard Burns were also missing."

"In Barney's room was the evidence of his premeditated departure, for his valuables were packed up, and a note was on the table addressed to Jailer Dale."

"It was short and to the point, and we give its contents for the benefit of our readers:

"DEAR DALE:—

"The price offered was too rich for my blood."

"I was tempted, and, a descendant of Adam, it was in my nature, and I fell."

"Archer and Burns accompany me, and I have laid my plans too well to be caught."

"Thanks for many kindnesses, and, if I sin in betraying my trust, I have compensation in the thought that I have saved an innocent man from the gallows."

"Yours,

"BARNEY."

"Such is the letter of the treacherous keeper, and we only hope that his plans are not so well laid but that he can be taken."

"The attempt to excuse himself by the assertion of his belief in Octave Archer's innocence is preposterous, for no sane person can doubt his guilt."

"Ah! do you hear that?" cried Rudolph Seldon as the detective read the last lines.

"Oh, yes, and I flatter myself I am sane, yet I do not believe the accused man guilty, and I rather rejoice at his escape."

"No, you assert that I am the guilty one?"

"I do, and I intend to prove it."

"By circumstantial evidence you may hang any one."

"No, my evidence against you I promise you shall not be circumstantial, Mr. Seldon, and so well am I convinced of your guilt that I treat you the more kindly, as I feel that I am with, I may say, a dying man, for you will surely hang for the murder of Cashier Clark."

Rudolph Seldon laughed. He had a nerve that had won the admiration of the detective more than once, and he was becoming more under his own control.

If his laugh was to conceal his sudden fear at the detective's reference to the gallows, it had that effect, for it did hide any emotion.

"So you look upon me as a dying man?" he asked in a cynical way.

"As one whose grave is nearly dug, yes, Mr. Seldon."

"Life is uncertain to all."

"True, and— My God!"

The train, which was now dashing swiftly along once more, gave a sudden lurch, then followed a wild shriek from the locomotive, a roaring, thundering sound, the crashing of timbers, and pell-mell, in one appalling mass the cars were hurled from a bridge into a seething river.

The car in which rode the detective and his prisoner was the rear one of the train, but it too went half over and was checked with a mighty shock which threw the two men into one end of the state-room.

An instant they remained in a heap, motionless, dead it seemed.

But then one moved and half-raised himself.

He gazed about him with a half-dazed look, then his eyes fell upon the crushed-in state-room, and the lamp, which had not been extinguished, showed him the white face of his comrade, a gash upon his forehead and the eyes closed as in death.

"Not killed, by Heaven!"

"I am not born to be hanged, when I can escape in such a wreck as this."

"But Detective Dana is dead, thank God, and I will soon be free."

The prisoner gazed wildly about him, as though having made up his mind to some fell purpose.

The storm raged without, and the wind drove the rain in through the roof and windows of the shattered car, as it lay half overturned upon the top of those that had gone before it down to destruction, and the death of its occupants.

Shrieks, screams and groans, with loud voices in command, entreaty and alarm, commingled with the sound of the storm and the roaring of the river.

But Rudolph Seldon heard nothing, saw nothing but the motionless form of the detective by his side.

Then he rose to his knees, and with his left hand drew from his pocket a knife.

It was the carving-knife which he had slipped from the restaurant table that day at dinner.

"I know enough of surgery to soon free myself from this incubus," said the prisoner, grimly, as he drew the sharp knife around the wrist of the detective to sever the hand and thus free himself from the man he was manacled to.

It was a ghastly act, and the face of the prisoner revealed all that he felt in severing the detective's hand to save himself from the gallows.

But the keen point and blade of the knife soon did the cruel work, and the prisoner sprang to his feet a free man, excepting the manacle that yet hung to his wrist.

But, as he turned to drag himself from the wrecked car, he heard the hoarsely-uttered words:

"You are still doomed, Rudolph Seldon!"

He turned with a cry of horror and beheld the handless arm of the detective shaken at him, and shrunk away before the words:

"I told you I had not made known to any one your crime; but I had written it to one, to be opened in case I did not return by a certain time.

"I am dying, but that time is up in two days, and you are doomed!"

With a cry of horror and rage commingled, Rudolph Seldon sprang toward the detective, when the car tottered, swayed, and with a crash went down into the river below.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE THREE FUGITIVES.

THREE persons sat in a large room in a hotel at a station on a Western railroad.

One was seemingly an old man, another was dressed as a country clergyman, and the third was in feminine attire.

And yet to one who saw them, and was an unseen witness himself, they would not have appeared to be in truth what they pretended to be.

The woman was of large stature, and might be a farmer's wife, while the one in the dress of a clergyman could pass for a missionary, with his spectacles and benign expression.

The old man's gray locks, worn long, would indicate that he was past three-score years, and yet he paced the room with the step of a youth.

Stopping suddenly before the parson he said:

"So you think it best that we should part here?"

"I do, for there is nothing in common between us, and I intend to go my way alone in life.

"You saved me from the gallows, doubtless, and this young man from a long imprisonment; but you were well paid, and I thank you as well, Jailer Barney, and hope, if you can satisfy your conscience for your act in aiding our escape, you may enjoy prosperity and happiness through life.

"The train East leaves in half an hour and I shall take it."

The speaker was Octave Archer, and the one he addressed was Henry Barney, the jailer who had been a traitor to his duty and aided the escape of the two prisoners.

The other in the room was Howard Burns, disguised as a woman, for his fresh, handsome face allowed him to readily make up as such.

Octave Archer addressed the man Barney with the look and words of one who held contempt for him.

He knew that the act of the man in releasing him and the other prisoner had been from no belief in their innocence, no feeling of compassion, but because he had been well-paid for it.

The jailer had suggested that the three make their way to Texas or California, and begin life anew.

Octave Archer had suspected that Howard Burns would yield, not seeing the jailer as he did, in his true character, and he believed that the young engraver might be innocent of the charge against him of being a counterfeiter, and so he hoped to have him steer clear of Barney, whom he regarded as an unprincipled rascal.

Hence he said what he did, and his words angered the jailer, who said sharply:

"You are a pretty man to preach to me, when you were in for murder and stealing."

He regretted his words instantly, for Octave Archer had him by the throat, and with a grip he could not shake off, while he hissed forth:

"Retract your words or we go back to jail together, for I do not fear to stand my trial if the gallows is before me, and you will suffer as you deserve for your treachery in releasing us."

"I do ask pardon, Mr. Archer, for I had no right to say what I did," said the man when the grip on his throat was released, while Howard Burns, who again saw a prison cell staring him in the face, through a quarrel between his companions, said quickly:

"I think Mr. Archer is right, Barney, for us to go on separate ways.

"It is safer to say the least, and I shall do as he does."

"All right, I wanted to have us stick together, seeing as we were all three in the same boat, but have your own way, gentlemen."

"We are not all in the same boat, sir, for neither this gentleman nor myself have been convicted of crime, in spite of proofs against us, while to us, Mr. Burns and myself, we know you to have been guilty of betraying your trust for gold.

"But I care not to quarrel with you, so shall go my way.

"Good morning, Mr. Barney, and as before I say I wish you no harm.

"Mr. Burns, good-by, sir, and some day I hope we may meet again."

So saying Octave Archer grasped the hand of the young man, bowed to the jailer, and, with a glance at himself in the mirror, to see that he still looked the country parson, he left the room.

He bought a ticket eastward and took a seat in the train which was nearly ready to start, just as he saw Howard Burns come out of the hotel, in his feminine garb, and walk over to the track where stood the south-bound train.

Busy with a paper he did not notice a woman enter until a voice said:

"Is this seat occupied, sir?"

"No, madam," and he made room for Howard Burns.

The car was filling up, and with a quiet movement the young man handed to Octave Archer a slip of paper on which was written hastily in lead-pencil:

"Barney is revengeful and means mischief to you."

He hinted to me that he had half a mind to put an officer on your track, and I saw him talking to one just now over at the other station and heard him say:

"I think he is the man, and he takes the East-bound train and is dressed as a preacher."

"I at once came to warn you."

Octave Archer read hurriedly what was written, and with a whispered word to the disguised young man arose and left the car.

He got out on the opposite side to the station, and made his way around the train to the station of the southwest road, not half a block away and entered a car at one end as he saw Howard Burns do so at the other end.

They took a seat together, and just then the train pulled out on its way.

I owe you a debt of gratitude, sir, I shall never forget," said Octave Archer, as the train began to dash swiftly along.

"The man at heart is a villain, and was angered at your contempt for him."

"I could ill conceal it, when he said we should go together."

"And you did not, and so angered him into revenge, and I am sure there is an officer on that train you were to have taken, who would have arrested you upon reaching the next town, while Barney made his escape after betraying you."

"There is a junction a few miles from here, and we meet the north-bound train there, so you had better take it."

"I will do so; and you, Mr. Burns?"

"I do not fear to tell you that it was through my mother that I escaped, and she also, for some one else's sake, aided you."

"She will meet me in Texas, and on a ranch there I hope to hide from the hounds of the law, for those counterfeiters would have had me go to prison with them by swearing falsely against me."

"I do not doubt it, sir; but do you fear to tell me where a letter could reach you, if occasion arose to address you one?"

"My mother's maiden name was Howard, so I shall drop that of Burns, as she will also, and be known as Harvey Howard, which are my Christian names, and a letter addressed to me at San Antonio will reach me; but here is the junction, sir."

"Thank you, and good-by," and grasping the hand of the young man, who had certainly saved him from rearrest, Octave Archer left the train at the junction, entered the north-bound Express and was soon dashing swiftly away from danger, for Henry Barney had revengefully sent an officer on the train after him, telling him he had seen a man disguised as a country parson, who he was sure was the escaped prisoner, Octave Archer, for whose capture so large a reward had been offered.

It was the second day after the escape of the two prisoners, in company with their guard, and their disguises certainly were most clever, and such as to defy detection; but when they had reached the hotel where they were to part, Barney had suggested that they cast their lot together in the future, a proposal which met with a refusal already known, and which excited the revenge of the treacherous jailer.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FUGITIVE'S VOW.

JAILER HENRY BARNEY had certainly done his work well, for he had arranged for the escape of the prisoners and himself, and obtained disguises that were perfect.

Howard Burns was a fine young fellow, a skillful engraver, and admired by all who knew him.

Whether guilty or not, he had been caught in bad company, and was very sure to be sent to prison with the gang of counterfeiters, who had sworn that he was one of their number.

Having played feminine parts in amateur theatricals, he had suggested a female wardrobe as his disguise, and his mother had brought it to him.

From his past experience in successfully playing the clergyman, Octave Archer had suggested a clerical outfit for himself, with

spectacles and high hat, and when his mustache had been shaven off, and a wig of long hair put on, along with spectacles, he certainly looked the country preacher.

This disguise Mrs. Burns had also secured, along with one as an old man for the jailer, who cut off his long beard, cut his hair short and wore a white wig, while he stooped in his walk and carried a cane.

Not a detective on the search for them, after their flight had become known, had suspected the trio, and Henry Barney had plotted to keep the others with him.

The truth was, he pretended to have received but a small sum for aiding them, and hoped to get more out of each of the prisoners; but Mrs. Burns had told her son just what the jailer had been paid, and Octave Archer's refusal to become his associate had caused his true nature to crop out in wishing revenge, and so he had sought to have him retaken while he and Howard Burns went their way in safety.

But the young engraver had thwarted him in his plot, and so it was that Octave Archer escaped rearrest, as he had not suspected the jailer of such an act against him, evil as he felt he was at heart.

"It has taught me a lesson," he muttered, as he sat alone in the car, rushing rapidly northward.

But he knew, if the police officer sent after him, did not find him on the train, telegrams might be sent to all points, to head off a man of his description, and therefore it would not be safe to remain upon the train, or go to the towns.

He therefore waited until dark, and though he had his ticket purchased on for a long way, he slipped off the train when it halted for water, and as it rolled on found himself in the outskirts of a small village.

He walked along the track to the depot and then sought a livery-stable, where he asked for a team and driver to take him out into the country, naming a place where he knew there was no railroad.

He obtained a buggy, pair of horses and driver, and drove on until nearly dawn, when he reached the town and sought rest at the hotel, while the driver started on his return.

The sleepy night-clerk assigned him a room, and when he knew that some one else would be on duty, after the breakfast hour, Octave Archer came down in his own suit of clothes, which he had in his satchel, and without his spectacles, feeling that he would not be known.

Going among the stores, after he had breakfasted, he made some purchases the better to disguise himself, and then, purchasing a horse and buggy started out through the country.

The first woods that he reached, where he could put on a disguise, he halted, and half an hour after no one would have known him in his rig of gray hair, a broad-brimmed slouch hat, blue woolen shirt, and pants stuck in top-boots.

Thus, changing his disguise, going by stage-coach at one time, at another on horseback, and again in a buggy, for he sold his outfits and bought others at discretion, he reached the Canada border and sought refuge in a secluded town.

Seeking pleasant quarters in a cheerful country inn, he determined to there remain and plot for the future.

He had received the letter written him by Joyce Stapleton, and the money accompanying it.

Proclaiming innocence of murder and robbery, most men, if so, would have faced a trial; but he had decided to escape and had done so.

More, he had taken the money sent him by the woman he loved, the money which he had secured by pawning the family jewels left to her, and those which had been late gifts to her.

As he paced the floor of his pleasant room, the second day after his arrival in the Canadian town, he held in his hands a newspaper, in which he had read an account of his escape and the reward—a liberal one—offered for his capture.

Raising the paper, he read:

"A man six feet in height, erect form with broad shoulders, slender but athletic frame, dark-brown, waving hair worn longer than is fashionable and a dark mustache with long ends curled upward.

"Piercing eyes, a bronzed complexion, white, even teeth, and very small hands and feet."

A bitter laugh broke from his lips as he finished reading the description of himself, and he stepped in front of a full-length mirror and calmly surveyed himself.

The most clever detective would never have recognized him as the one described.

He did not stand erect, and his coat was cut so as to give him sloping shoulders, while he stooped, and had the appearance of being very round-shouldered, so well had a hump been simulated by padding.

His feet were incased in large shoes, and his face was clean-shaven, while some "complexion balm" had given his skin a very pale look.

Then, too, his "brown, waving hair" had been shaven close to his head, and a pair of gold spectacles gave him a scholastic look, while they concealed his "piercing dark eyes."

Whatever his teeth might have been, they

now were stained yellow, and his clothes seemed to have been made for a larger man.

"Even her eyes could never penetrate this disguise, and in it I feel perfectly safe," he muttered.

"Yes, I feel so sure of escaping detection that I will not delay here longer, nor will I hide away, when there is work for me to do.

"Let me see.

"Her letter says:

"Though my heart is full of grief for you, there is not in it one shadow of doubt of you. * * * *

"Locked up in prison you have the hand of infamy upon you, and are unable to remove it; but free, you can take steps to prove that you are falsely accused.

"Will you do this for your sake, for mine?

"I feel that you will, Octave, and so have arranged to set you free. * * * *

"I shall hope to have you come some day and bring me the proof that you are innocent. * * * Your accepting your pardon through me will be proof that you have undertaken the task I set you free to accomplish—* * *—only then come to me."

"Such is her letter, and her love, her money, kept me from the gallows, for how could I have escaped it with such proof against me?

"I am free, and here I have, of her money, over two thousand dollars, the corner-stone upon which I am to build for the future.

"My God! what a task there is before me.

"But I will not lose her, I will not give her up, and here I vow, fugitive that I now be, a hunted man, branded with infamy and charged with murder, that one day Joyce Stapleton shall be my wife.

"Yes, I vow it, and death alone shall thwart me," and the fugitive from the gallows raised his hands toward Heaven as he uttered the words in a low, quivering voice.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HEIR'S RETURN.

LAWYER ERNEST WILBER sat in his office, reading the morning paper, some days after the death of Judge Seldon.

"A horrible accident," he said with a shudder, as he finished reading an account of a frightful affair on a Western railroad.

"Plunged into a swollen river in the darkness and storm, and scores of lives lost; it is terrible.

"My God! I can never hear of a death, never see a dead form, that there does not come before me that dread scene when I killed poor Raoul Ford.

"I believe, I have often felt, that there was something in all that which I know not of, nor did poor Raoul, to cause us to face one another for a meeting of life or death to one of us.

"Sometimes, I even now feel that Rudolph Seldon could have amicably arranged our quarrel, had he so chosen, and if I wrong him, I am sorry, but it seems to me that he wished poor Ford out of the way, for he was afraid of him as a successful rival.

"Poor Raoul! I always say poor Raoul, and yet I think I am to be pitied.

"He is at rest in his grave and I live to feel conscience-stricken because my hand placed him there.

"Yes, I live to still dread the gallows for my deed, while that very dread forced me to sin for Rudolph Seldon as I did.

"It is true this other heir is not to be found, and yet it does not excuse me in changing the names in the will to give the large inheritance to Rudolph.

"The judge evidently had some good reason for his act, in giving the estate to that other, rather than to his son Rudolph, and he told me that a paper would explain all after his death.

"But I have not found that paper, so I am yet in the dark, and if Rudolph knows he keeps his secret closely.

"And where has he gone now, and with that man whom he said was his friend?

"Well, I have done the deed. I have given him the estate, for I feared to do otherwise, and that ends it—Well, sir?" and the lawyer turned to an office-boy who entered.

"A note for you, sir."

The lawyer glanced at it and muttered:

"He has returned, and wishes me to come at once."

Then he said aloud:

"Say to the messenger that I will come immediately."

Glancing again at the note, as the boy left the private office, he said:

"Now, this note was written under pressure of some strong mental excitement, for it is not like Rudolph's bold, even hand.

"That young man is in some trouble, and may bring up badly yet, but I hope he will not betray my secret."

So saying he arose, put on his hat and drove out to the handsome Seldon mansion.

He found Rudolph Seldon white-faced, nervous and pacing the room impatiently, and was greeted with:

"Ah! at last you are here.

"Did not my note admit of no delay, Wilber?"

"I came five minutes after its reception.

"When did you return?" coldly said the lawyer.

"After midnight."

"You look positively ill."

"I am, for I was in that frightful railroad smash-up which the papers are full of."

"Indeed! I was reading of it when your messenger came, and I congratulate you on your escape.

"Pray tell me how you were so fortunate?"

"I have no time to talk of it, nor do I care to, for I shudder at the remembrance," and the shudder was not a feigned one.

"I do not wonder," said the lawyer.

"What do you mean?" excitedly asked the heir.

"Why, Rudolph, you are really not yourself; so let me send you Doctor Reynolds, as your father's death, this changing of the will and the terrible accident have completely unnerved you," and Ernest Wilber stepped toward the library bell.

"Hold! do not dare touch that bell, for I need no doctor, and I am myself.

"I need you, and I want your aid at once, at once—do you hear, Ernest Wilber?"

"I do hear, so what can I do to serve you?"

"I must have a hundred thousand dollars at once in cash."

"Rudolph Seldon, are you mad?"

"Yes! no! I am painfully sane, for one can forget when mad, I have been told.

"But I need the sum I named, and at once."

"I can do nothing for you."

"I am my father's heir, am I not?"

"So the will now says," was the significant response.

"Well, his estate is worth a million."

"About that."

"Well, raise for me one hundred thousand dollars without delay."

"Rudolph, there are certain legal technicalities to be gone through before you get full possession of the fortune which my sin has placed in your hands.

"In a few weeks you can get all, be sole master, and do as you please; but now it cannot be done."

"I tell you it must."

"And I say it cannot be done."

"Do you dare me, Wilber?"

"Where there is no help for it, I can do nothing else."

"You refuse, then?"

"Show me a way out of it, and rather than have you threaten to make known my secret, as I know you are going to do, I will let you have the money."

Rudolph Seldon seemed convinced that the lawyer was right, so said:

"What sum can you raise for me?"

"I have the power to draw out the money in bank, if actually forced to do so."

"How much is it?"

"Thirty thousand in cash."

"Get me that, then?"

"You forget that you gave Doctor Ross Reynolds an order on me for twenty-five thousand of that the moment it could be paid."

"Confound Doctor Reynolds! I need it and must have it, so go and get me the money."

"I will write a check for it, and you indorse it as heir."

"I'll indorse anything, so write the check and go at once and bring me the money, for I must have it within the hour."

"I will get it as soon as I can drive to town and draw it from the bank."

"In the mean time I will look over the papers in my father's safe, so give me the keys."

"No, I will not do that, for I shall hold the keys until I transfer to you the entire control of the estate."

"And I say I will have them!" shouted Rudolph Seldon, savagely.

"And I say no," was the firm response of the lawyer.

"Ernest Wilber, give me those keys, or I will kill you," and the heir placed the muzzle of a revolver against the heart of the lawyer, who stood at bay before him.

CHAPTER XVI.

A LAWYER AT BAY.

WITH the muzzle of the pistol covering his heart, Ernest Wilber did not move, nor did his face show fear of death, though he seemed to feel that the weapon was held by the hand of a desperate man.

"Do you hear, Wilber? Give me those keys."

The words were uttered in a tone that was deadly in its earnestness, and full of menace.

"Rudolph Seldon, let us understand each other now, for I shall not give you the keys, and if you take my life in your desperation—for you appear desperate—you will never enjoy the fortune which together we have robbed another of, for the gallows will threaten you as it now does me, under the fear that you may betray my deadly act of years ago.

"Do you understand me, Rudolph?"

The bitter curse that broke from the lips of the man he addressed proved that the shot had hit dead center, for he flinched at the dread of the hangman's noose encircling his neck.

The picture, tersely drawn, and under fear of death, had been too real.

"Curse you, Ernest Wilber, why will you tempt me to kill you?" he said.

"I have said that I would get the money for you, that which is in bank, and soon all else will be in your hands.

"Surely you can wait until then?"

"No, I cannot wait, not a day, and even my now delaying here may be fatal; but gold I must have."

"My God, Rudolph, what has happened that you are in such a position?" cried the lawyer.

"That which will—But nothing has happened, other than that I have been a fool, played the wrong card, in fact, when I might have won the game by waiting, without danger to myself.

"But money I need at once and will have."

"I will go to the bank and—"

"And give me the keys that I may get money from the safe, for my father always kept a few thousands on hand."

"That I will not do."

"Then you compel me to act against my wish and force them from you."

"See here, man, don't dare me, for in the discharge of my duty, the protection of my trust, the law will uphold me.

"I do not fear death at the muzzle of your pistol, but at the end of the rope, and if you kill me it may save me from the gallows.

"I will not give you the keys, so do your worst."

The lawyer arose to the situation, and his fearless mien cowed the threatener.

He saw that he could not frighten him into giving over the keys, and to kill him would do no good, other than to raise the alarm and prevent his escape.

So he was forced to admit himself beaten by a man whose calm courage and noble nature he had always admired, and against whom he held that one act, his duel with Raoul Ford.

"Will you not be content with the money, Rudolph?" asked the lawyer, as the other paused.

"By Heaven! you force me to be, so get the money from the bank, and at once."

Ernest Wilber simply bowed and left the library, and a moment after the rumble of carriage-wheels upon the drive told that he was gone.

And Rudolph Seldon paced the floor like a madman for a few minutes, but then became calm.

"Curses upon him, he has thwarted me.

"I had hoped to force from him a hundred thousand, at least, and then get the family jewels from the safe, and also the money which I know to be in it, for my father never had less than four or five thousand there.

"Then, too, I wished to get those papers, for I desire to know just who this heir is.

"And Ernest Wilber has thwarted me, and I cannot wait, dare not wait, for did not that accursed detective tell me with his last breath, before our car toppled into the river, that he had written all to one who would make the truth known, did aught happen to him?

"He said within two days it would be known, and this is the second day, so dare I tarry here longer?

"Even now if his death in the accident is known, his letter to that one may have been opened and the hounds of the law turned loose upon my track.

"Oh, Heaven! was man ever so crushed, cheated of fortune with it in my very grasp?

"If I only knew who held that detective's letter, he would never open it, never know its contents.

"And what luck, to have to give up the jewels and money in the safe!

"I wonder if entreaty would get possession of the keys, or if I could persuade Wilber to remain here to-night with me to look over the contents of the safe together, for I would risk a few hours to get the valuables, money and papers in it, and there would be no doubt of my getting them," and the words were uttered in a grim tone of menace that showed the humor of the man, a deadly humor there was no mistaking.

"How long he stays," he burst forth with, when an hour had gone by and the lawyer did not return.

Then he impatiently left the library and walked out upon the broad piazza to see if he could discover the carriage returning.

But it was not in sight.

There lay before him the ornamental grounds about the mansion, the massive gateway leading to the highway, with the pretty town a mile or more down the valley.

Several times he muttered an impatient imprecation at the delay of the lawyer, and then, stopping suddenly, became perfectly calm.

For a moment he stood like a statue, and then said in a changed voice:

"This will not do for me, for I must command myself.

"I must not yield to fear or aught else, for I must become my own master in all things."

As though possessing the power to will it, he ran his hand across his face, and it seemed to

fairly gave the look of alarm and anger commingled that he had worn.

With a smile, as if pleased at the mastery of himself, he turned and looked down the highway toward the village, and said in a perfectly even tone:

"Not yet in sight—something has delayed him— Ah! there comes the carriage now."

He walked with quiet step now, not a shadow on his face, and watched the coming carriage.

The driver urged his horses on at a brisk pace, and turned into the grounds, to soon after draw rein before the stone steps of the mansion.

Ernest Wilber sprang out and was greeted with a pleasant welcome.

"Wilber, old fellow, I had half given you up."

The lawyer was surprised.

Was that the man he had left almost desperate nearly two hours before?

"No, I was detained," he said, and they went into the library together.

"I have to disappoint you, Rudolph."

The lips twitched, but there was no sudden oath, no explosion of temper, as Ernest Wilber had looked for, only the words:

"Indeed, and why?"

"Well, I presented the check, and the cashier called me into his private office and said that the thirty thousand was deposited on interest, and as to-day was the last of the month, when all depositors drew to pay off their employees, to take so large a sum would cripple the bank, though within a few days the check could be paid without trouble.

"I could understand this explanation, and so asked how much of it he could pay.

"He said ten thousand would be all they could spare before next week, and so I took that amount."

"I feel that you have done your best, Ernest, and I must make that sum do; but I am going away on an extended journey, to be gone some little time, and it would be a great favor to me if you would remain with me to-night, and we can go over the contents of the safe together, for I wish to know just what it contains, though I will leave everything in your hands.

"Will you do this, Ernest?"

"Yes, I cannot refuse you this, Randolph, but I would prefer to wait until after all is legally arranged."

"A few days sooner will make no difference, as all is mine, anyhow.

"I will order dinner, and afterward we can have the evening for our work," and with no dread of evil Ernest Wilber consented.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRAP.

THERE was nothing to complain of in the dinner which Randolph Seldon set before his guest and attorney.

It was excellent, and the servants were thoroughly trained, for the judge was a *bon vivant*, and lived on the best in the land.

The cellar was filled with choicest wines, and the heir seemed to take a particular enjoyment in the dinner and entertaining the man he had invited to dine with him but to entrap.

Never had Ernest Wilber known Randolph Seldon to be so entertaining, and he was quite surprised at the young man's wit and power to entertain.

They had been college chums together, though the lawyer had been a senior when Randolph was a freshman; but as the father of Ernest Wilber had been the confidential manager of the estate of Judge Seldon for years, so the work descended to the son when the father died.

Never intimate friends, yet the two young men had been thrown much together, and were at least friendly.

Judge Seldon had been drawn toward the young lawyer by his dignified mien and sound good sense, while he had predicted a brilliant career for him through life.

In fact, it was through the judge that Ernest Seldon had been educated to the law, and given a start.

Such was the claim which the young attorney had to regard Judge Seldon with kindness, affection and gratitude, and he had done all in his power to win the esteem of the son, though at heart he could not but feel they were not companionable.

Judge Seldon had placed such perfect confidence in the lawyer that he gave to him an almost unlimited control of the estate and left him to carry out his wishes as often expressed to him.

But he little dreamed of the ax which his son held suspended over the head of the lawyer, and that he could be forced to go again to his wishes from a secret held by Rudolph Seldon.

With this explanation the reader will understand more fully just how matters stood between the two young men, yet one would never have suspected, as they sat there at dinner that day, that in the heart of the one there was contempt hatred for the other, while that other felt bitterness toward the man he pretended to be the friend of.

It was dark when dinner was over, and the two adjourned to the brightly-lighted library.

Then, leaving the lawyer to enjoy his cigar, Rudolph Seldon went out and dismissed the servants to their quarters for the night, after telling the coachman to have a pair of horses and a buggy ready to take the lawyer back to town, as he was compelled to go, and that he would drive him there.

Then he sought his father's room, which he had not entered since the night the judge died.

It was silent and gloomy, but the young heir had a lamp in his hand, and after a short search in a closet seemed to find what he wished, for he departed from the room and soon after entered the library.

If he was anxious and nervous now he did not show it, so completely had he mastered himself; but there was an expression upon his face which was to be feared.

"Well, Wilber, I am ready now, so let us get to work."

Ernest Wilber was willing to begin work, so took out his keys and very quickly opened the safe and in a way that caused Rudolph Seldon to remark:

"You open the safe more readily than the governor used to do.

"He made so much work of it I had an idea that it was a combination lock."

The lawyer made no reply, and taking out of a drawer a buckskin bag, placed it upon the table, at the same time opening a book which he had also taken from the safe.

"I have in this book an inventory of everything in the safe, Rudolph, as also of your father's separate properties and even the furniture and all in this mansion.

"But let us go over what is in the safe first, for the real estate, bonds and mortgages you know about, or nearly so."

"Yes; it is what is in the safe I am ignorant of, though I know there are some heirlooms in the way of jewels and other things."

"Yes, in this bag are watches, rings, earrings, necklaces and bracelets, which belonged to your mother and several generations of ancestors.

"You can look over the list, if you wish."

"No, I only wish to know that I have them, so lay that aside and tell me what that drawer contains?"

"Money, and there is just four thousand three hundred dollars there in gold and bills, for I counted it the day before your father died, when I paid the servants' wages."

"You do not feel at liberty to let me have the money?"

"No, not to touch a thing here until I receive your receipt for all."

"Perhaps it is better so; but what are those papers?"

"Mortgages and bonds."

"I see, and that one?"

"A paper addressed to me, to be opened under certain conditions in the will."

"Why not now open it, as it is to you?"

"Because the conditions of the will were not carried out as your father intended."

"How do you mean?"

"You were not the heir to the fortune, Rudolph."

"Ah! I understand now; but I get the property as the will now stands?"

"Yes, as it now stands; but I do not feel at liberty to now open that sealed envelope."

"I have an idea that it holds a secret."

"So have I."

"About this mysterious heir?"

"Perhaps."

"Let us solve the mystery by opening the sealed envelope?"

"No, and as you know the contents of the safe I will close it."

He returned the bag and other things quickly, and the door of the safe was closed before Rudolph Seldon could see how it was done.

"Thank you, Wilber, and now let us have a glass of wine and retire."

He poured out the wine and each emptied his glass, after which the lawyer went to the room which he always occupied when at the mansion.

Hardly had he undressed when his head reeled, and staggering toward the bed he gasped as he fell upon it:

"My God! I believe he has drugged me—I—"

But he sunk into unconsciousness, and a moment after the door opened and Rudolph Seldon entered and approached the bed with the air of a man who knew that there was nothing to be feared from his victim.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FLIGHT FROM FORTUNE.

ERNEST WILBER lay upon the bed motionless, except for his hard-drawn breathing, and Rudolph Seldon approached and bent over him as though he knew there was nothing to fear.

"He is good for hours, and in that time I will be far away."

"It is my last chance, for I dare not linger here now, for every moment I dread that a telegram may come from the one to whom Detective Dana sent the sealed package, to open to-day, if he did not return."

"Now for the keys, and then the jewels and the money, with that special paper for Wilber, I will soon get possession of."

So saying, half aloud, he took up the clothing of the lawyer and began to search through the pockets.

A roll of money, amounting to several hundreds, was cast aside, along with some papers that held no interest for him.

Then he found the keys, and quietly left the room, returning to the library.

He sought on the bunch of keys for the one to open the safe, and found it.

It was a strange lock, in a round plate set in the wall, and the key turned readily.

As it did so, the round plate drew out with the key, and he believed that the safe was unlocked.

But a curse sprang to his lips, as in the cavity, where he had drawn the round plate from, was a combination-lock.

There it stared him in the face, the numbers like a Hebrew alphabet to him, and without understanding the combination leaving him as wholly at fault as though he had no key.

He searched the numbers over and over again, turned the grip a hundred different ways, but all was useless, and he knew that he might so continue until evening and accomplish nothing.

The safe was set in the solid wall of the massive chimney, and could not be moved.

To break into it would be impossible, even did the noise not alarm the servants.

There was nothing for him to do but to replace the plate and return the keys.

Then he must depart with a speed from the home to which the altered will made him the heir.

He must fly from the vast fortune which had fallen into his grasp, give all up to escape arrest for murder and bank-robbery, for, if not guilty, Detective Dana had written to some one—and oh! if he had only known that some one! all that he charged him with.

Detective Dana, handless, bruised and half-stunned, he had seen go down with him in the car, to plunge into the river with other debris and struggling humanity.

The waters had engulfed them, and he had struggled, fought hard for life, and at last, nearer dead than living, had come to the surface and grasped some object to which he could cling.

When rested, he had sought the shore, and then, with the manacle upon his wrist, he had thrust that hand into his vest, as though wounded, and skulked away in the darkness, leaving the dead and the dying behind him.

Of course the detective could not be other than dead, and as he had written that fatal secret to another, to be opened if he did not return by a certain time, Rudolph Seldon knew that there was but one thing left for him to do.

That he did, for it was to return to his home and get all out of his inheritance that he could.

He had struck high when he demanded a hundred thousand dollars, but been forced to take but a tenth of that sum.

He had then sought to take the contents of the safe, for the few thousands there, and the old family jewels, were a small fortune in themselves.

But here he had been again foiled, and with what he had he would be forced to fly.

"Was ever man so unfortunate, so thwarted upon the very threshold of success and fortune?" he fairly ground out between his teeth.

Then he carried the keys back, and replaced them in the pocket of the still unconscious lawyer.

"Curse you! if I but dared!" and he half-drew a knife from his bosom, and bent over the form on the bed.

But he resisted the temptation, so strong within him, and turned away, muttering:

"He has thwarted me, and I believe it is because I forced him to obey me, holding his secret as I do.

"But when I am safe, some day in the future, I can make him suffer, and I will."

"Oh, yes, Ernest Wilber, I will be revenged upon you."

He hissed forth the words, feeling that he had been injured by a man who had sinned and done all in his power for him.

Then he returned to the library and said, savagely:

"I have half a mind to remain and face it all."

"They suspect me, or will do so through Detective Dana's charge of murder, but it will be hard to prove, while everything points to the guilt of this man, Archer, and his escape will be sure to fasten guilt upon him."

"And yet Detective Dana may have trumped up seeming proofs that may hang me."

"No; I dare not risk the gallows for gold."

"I will fly, and I can make a fortune to replace the one that now slips through my fingers."

"I will have a corner-stone of ten thousand to build on, and, losing my identity, I can see a way before me to win any game I dare play."

"And then, too, I will be free of that woman."

"She is becoming dangerous, and—"

mand her rights if I am the heir to Judge Seldon, while she will gladly let me go if I am a fugitive.

"I will fly from all, and no longer be Rudolph Seldon."

"No; I am another man!"

He hastened to his room and gathered a few traps which he wished to carry with him.

Then he went out to the stables and found the coachman asleep in the buggy.

"Cruse, I had a telegram just now calling me away."

"I did not disturb Mr. Wilber, who was not well and retired early, so tell him in the morning I was forced to depart, and I will drive across to the valley road and catch the train there."

"Will you leave the horses there, sir?"

"Yes; until my return."

"You will have to make those fellows look well after them, sir, for they are too fine beasts to be trusted to a common hand."

"I know that."

And springing into the buggy, where Cruse had already placed his traps, the man flying from a fortune over which hung the shadow of the gallows, drove away in the darkness of the night just as a flash of lightning illumed the heavens and a deep crash of thunder followed that seemed to shake the earth.

"My God! is this an ill-omen?" he gritted through his teeth, as he sent the horses rapidly along the highway in his flight.

CHAPTER XIX.

SHADOWED.

THE scene changes to the grand metropolis of the country, the City of New York, and to a time some months after the flight of the heir from fortune, for fear that an ignominious death on the gallows might follow the inheritance.

A man was pacing the room of an obscure hotel, situated in the very worst part of the city.

He was flashily dressed in a checked suit, wore glasses, his hair long, and a full beard, in fact so great was the metamorphosis that no one who had once known the distinguished-looking and courtly man of the world, Rudolph Seldon, would have recognized him in the one who then was the occupant of the stuffy room in the fourth-class hotel in the Bowery.

"Oh! if I only knew if that hangman's rope really hung over my head or not, I would know just what to do."

"But I do not know," and he spoke with bitter vehemence, while his brow was dark, his lips set, as he paced the room with a step that was of uncertain gait.

"I found out all that I could through the man I paid to go there to my home, and that was next to nothing."

"Ernest Wilber had recovered from the drug, yet he did not make it public that I had drugged him, or something would have been known of the affair."

"To keep the house in safety, he took up his quarters there, and is now dwelling where I should be master; but does he know why I am a fugitive?"

"My man said that it was reported only that I had mysteriously disappeared, and nothing was known of me after I sold my horses and buggy and took the train westward."

"Not a shadow of suspicion of wrong did he hear in circulation regarding me, and so the charge of murder and robbery in D— cannot be known."

"But is not the silence of the one to whom Detective Dana told his secret a trap to ensnare me?"

"Is the one who holds the detective's confession keeping silent, hoping to have me return and thus walk into the net he has laid for me?"

"That is what I fear."

"And has he told Ernest Wilber?"

"I fear if I saw Wilber he might be revengeful enough to betray me, be the consequences to himself what they might."

"It would not do to drive him too far, for he is not the man to force beyond a certain point."

"Then there is that infernal doctor, Ross Reynolds."

"His silence is ominous, for though he did not get the money I promised, he certainly has not made his suspicions known, and is holding his secret as an ax above my head should I return."

"Bah! I do not believe my father was poisoned, and yet he seemed very willing to give me the proof."

"In Satan's name, who could have committed that crime, and why?"

"By Heaven! the thought strikes me that it may have been that mysterious heir."

"And who is that heir?"

"That is what worries me, for the will was non-committal, other than by name, but stated the accompanying confession would explain all."

"And that confession Ernest Wilber doubtless knows all about."

"The will made it out a man's name; but who?"

"I am a fool to worry over it all when I do not dare claim what the will, altered as it was, leaves me."

"No, I must yield all and begin my new career, for something tells me did I go to claim

my own, the one who holds Detective Dana's secret would spring his trap upon me, and Doctor Reynolds would also demand a sum of hush-money I would not pay."

"They would beggar me, or hang me, so I will face the future in another career."

"No one knows me as I now am, and I can hide in this great metropolis and my talents will win me a fortune."

"There is even comfort in my being a fugitive, when I think I am freed from that dangerous girl, Di Delmar."

"She showed how dangerous she was in thwarting me in my intended false marriage with her, and keeping her secret, too, until she could use it with advantage to herself."

"Then, too, I never suspected that she witnessed the duel between Ernest Wilber and Raoul Ford, and just to think of her saying that she would swear that it was I who fought the fatal fight, I who fired the deadly shot."

"Yes, and if she brought the charge, Ernest Wilber, to save himself, would swear as she did."

"I am certainly against the wall, hard pressed, indeed, as Rudolph Seldon, but as some one else I can build anew, become the architect of my own fortunes, and no one, not a soul, shall know me as I am."

He paced the room as he talked half aloud to himself.

Now his movements were slow, and the next moment he walked rapidly, as his thoughts moved him.

His face was clouded the while, and showed that he realized all that he had to give up, and all that was before him.

Suddenly he started, as a knock came at the door.

He opened it, and a boy clad in messenger uniform stepped in.

"Professor Reidel, sir?" he asserted rather than asked.

"Yes, but—"

"A message for you, sir," said the boy, briskly.

"But I expect no message, I am a stranger here, and I—I—"

"I was told to come to this hotel, which we boys call the Bums' Roost, and give this letter to Professor Reidel, so here it is."

The man took the letter, though his face paled.

He had just asserted that no one knew him, so why should he, in his disguise as "Professor Reidel," receive a communication from any one?

A cold sweat broke out upon his forehead, and he turned away to break the seal, that the boy might not see his emotion.

The young messenger was a handsome fellow, scarcely over fourteen he seemed, and watched the "professor" sharply, while upon his face a look rested that was unfathomable.

The "professor" broke the envelope open and glanced at the sheet of note-paper it contained.

There was no heading, no date, but simply a line and a name written in the center of the page.

And that line and name were read aloud by a man, coming in something very like a gasp and groan commingled from his lips:

"I have shadowed you."

DI SELDON."

He turned with a face from which all emotion had gone, and said pleasantly as he stepped toward the messenger:

"Di, I am so glad you have come, for I need your aid."

"I knew you the moment you entered that door, in spite of your disguise."

CHAPTER XX.

JOYCE TRIUMPHS.

"WELL, Joyce, what do you think now, of the guilt, or innocence, of that man Archer?"

The question was asked by Mr. Stapleton at the breakfast-table the second morning after the escape of Octave Archer and Howard Burns from the jail in D—.

Joyce had returned homelate the night before, from a visit to friends in Chicago, and meeting her father at breakfast the following morning, she found him reading the full account of the escape of the prisoners through the aid of Barney, the keeper.

A look of pain flashed over the face of the beautiful girl at the question of her father, and she bit her lips as though to control her emotion, but after a moment answered:

"I think just the same, sir, that Mr. Archer is innocent."

"Then why did not he remain and await his trial?"

"Because he saw that others, like you, father, had prejudged him, and he would have been hanged on circumstantial evidence."

"Why there was not the shadow of a chance for him before any jury, under the facts of the case as they seem to appear to every one except myself."

"I certainly would have to find him guilty under oath, for he admits in his letter that he met Cashier Clark on the train, who, recognizing him as an old acquaintance, confessed that he had a large sum of money with him, which

he was anxious to deposit at once in the bank-safe, as he thought that he was shadowed."

"Then Octave Archer accompanied him to the bank, and the result was that poor Clark was shot, locked up in the vault, and when the detective arrived, he found the murderer with the cashier's money upon him and leaving the place."

"He had seen them leave the train together, and for some reason, which the trial would have made known, followed them to the bank, and fortunately arrived in time to prevent the escape of Octave Archer, though too late to save poor Clark's life."

"I admit, father, that the evidence, as it appears against Octave Archer, is appalling; but I believe his letter to me."

"You will of course give that letter in to the district attorney?"

"I will of course not, sir, for that letter is to me, sir, and as it is not publicly known that I was engaged to Mr. Archer, I do not see why my name should be brought into the affair."

"You are right, my child; your name should not be connected with that of a murderer and a thief."

"Father!" and the eyes were indignantly turned upon the merchant.

"There is no need of mincing words, Joyce, for what else is he?"

"The law, I believe, allows the benefit of a doubt; permits the prisoner to be considered innocent until proven guilty."

"As Mr. Archer has escaped, he has not yet been proven guilty."

"His escape is further proof of his guilt, to my mind."

"Not necessarily so, father, for he doubtless realized how, a poor man, deserted by his friends, and seemingly caught in the act, all would go against him."

"Who was this young fellow Burns who escaped with him?"

"Was he not the son of the woman who was your nurse when you were a baby?"

"Yes, father."

"I knew that she had some trouble, was deserted by her husband, and had some young children to care for, and so worked upon your mother's sympathy to give her a situation."

"Father, Mrs. Burns's devotion as a nurse to my mother saved her life, as I have heard you say, and she accepted the place offered her because she was in need, though born to a different sphere in life."

"And her son has gone to the bad, it seems."

"I am sorry for her."

"Her son is an engraver, and was engaged to do some work by those who represented themselves as Government officials."

"He accomplished his work so well that the men came out in their true character, and told him they were counterfeiters and he must be one of their band."

"He refused, but, unable to lose his money, sought their den to get it, just as the detectives raided the place and arrested all."

"Howard Burns pleaded innocence, but the counterfeiters, believing that he had really betrayed them, said he was the leader, and there was his work, his tools and all as proof against him, and so he had to suffer, and was another case of one who would suffer from what appeared to be positive evidence of his guilt."

"And you do not believe him guilty also, Joyce?"

"I do not, sir."

"I thought his mother was a poor woman."

"She is comparatively so, father."

"Yet she found the money to bribe the jailer, it seems."

"Does the paper so state?" Joyce asked, quickly, while her face flushed and then turned pale.

"The paper says that Jailer Barney was seen several times in conversation with a woman, and his own letter admits that he was tempted by a bribe."

"Why do they not seek Mrs. Burns?"

"Egad, they have sought her, but in vain, for she has sold her property and gone."

"And doubtless was willing to offer the money for her son's escape, feeling that he was innocent, and not wishing to see him languish in prison."

"Yes; but I do not think he was innocent, and I would like to know who furnished the money for Archer's escape."

"Perhaps he was in the cell with Burns, and one could not be released without the other?"

"No; their cells were far apart, and I cannot believe that Barney, the keeper, would sell himself so cheap as the two thousand dollars the paper states the property of Mrs. Burns was sold for."

"But what about Archer's bribe?"

The beautiful face crimsoned again, and a hasty glance was cast at the merchant.

"Does he suspect, or really know all?" Joyce asked herself.

"Perhaps Mr. Archer had the money about him."

"No; for he was searched, and besides, he was a poor man, with very little, I believe, to call his own."

"I was a fool to allow you to become engaged to him."

"Father, you are like your old self, for you seem cruelly bitter toward Octave Archer."

"He saved you a fortune, yes, far more, risking his life against the road-agents when you and the drive. The coach dared not utter a word or raise a finger."

"He has proven himself the gentleman in all things and told you that he was a poor man, but had hopes of a fortune some day."

"Of his past he did not speak, and of that even I am in ignorance; but that he is guilty of robbery and murder I do not, cannot, will not believe."

"But, father, don't judge him guilty until he is proven so, and be your old good self once more, if only for the sake of what you, what we both owe to him in gratitude."

"I have renewed my engagement with him, and so let it be, and, father, as you are retiring from business, as your fortune is an enormous one, let us leave our home here and go away, and after traveling awhile, find a home in the great city of New York, where we can form new ties and associations, and where I can try and forget the past, for I love Octave Archer with all my heart, and—"

She could say no more, but burst into tears, and her father sprang to her side, while he said, earnestly:

"There, my child, I was imbibed, but I will say no more, and all shall be as you say, and we will at once give up our home here."

CHAPTER XXI.

UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS.

A MAN sat in a small room in a hotel, and in the darkness, for he had not lighted the gas, as the night was warm.

The window before which he was seated looked out upon a narrow area, a brick wall facing him, and a few feet below, looked into another window on the opposite side.

One would hardly sit thus in the dark, alone and with the hours creeping on toward midnight, unless he was brooding in bitterness it would seem.

Suddenly a light shone in the window opposite and below him, and a hotel servant entered accompanied by two persons, whose appearance indicated that they were travelers.

One of them carried a square leather box, which he placed upon the table as though its contents were valuable.

His face was that of a Hebrew gentleman, and his costume would indicate that he was just off of a sea voyage.

His companion was a young man, but not of Hebrew blood, but he also looked like a voyager.

There were two beds in the room, which was large and comfortable, and when the servant left, the Hebrew bolted and locked the door with the greatest caution.

He also came to the window and glanced out into the area, looked down the fifty feet to the ground, and then across and upward into the window twelve feet away.

He did not see the form sitting back in the darkness, and so turned away and spoke to his friend, his words distinctly heard by the one across the area.

"I have to be most cautious, you know, with a fortune in gems to look after."

"I will be so glad when I can get rid of them to-morrow."

"I do not doubt it, for I have noticed, ever since we met in Paris, that you have been most anxious."

"Do you wonder at it, with a hundred thousand in gems to keep safe?"

"No indeed; but I am awfully tired, so let us go to bed, and I will not need the rocking of the ship to make me sleep to-night."

"Nor I, and I am also worn out."

The man at the window across the area might have moved; but he was an unintentional eavesdropper, and did not see why he should make his presence known.

Then there was something about the younger man that attracted him particularly.

"If that man is not a villain, then I fail to read the human face," he muttered, and perhaps his suspicion of a man's character, of whom he knew nothing, caused him to still remain at the window.

He saw the Hebrew gentleman undress and seek the bed in the further corner of the room, taking his leather box with him and placing it over against the wall.

The other bed he could not see, but the young man disappeared, after turning down the light, but not so low that the watcher could not see all that went on in the room.

Thus half an hour passed and the watcher still sat in deep reverie at the window.

At last he was about to arouse himself to retire, when he saw a form clad in white glide noiselessly across the opposite room.

It was the younger man in his night costume. He approached the bed of the other, whose face was turned toward the wall, one hand resting upon the precious box.

In one hand he carried a handkerchief, in the other a bottle, and the watcher saw him bend over the sleeper.

He saw that the handkerchief was several times moistened from the contents of the bottle,

and then held lightly before the face of the sleeper.

"By Heaven! but I was right!"

"There is devilry there!" he muttered, and he gazed fixedly upon the two occupants of the room.

For several minutes the man stood by the bed of the other, and then into the open window of the watcher floated a sensuous fragrance, something that incited slumber.

"It is chloroform! I must take a hand in this bold game," said the watcher, and rising, noiselessly, he moved about his room for awhile, opened the door softly and stepped out into the hallway.

It was a long corridor, dimly lighted, and he made his way along it until he came to another hallway leading to the left.

Here he returned and continued on until another broad corridor led him still to the left.

The lights burned more brightly here, and he glanced at the doors, and counting them went on until he came to one over the transom of which he saw a dim reflection.

"This is the room," he said, and at once went on to the shadow of the stairway.

Hardly had he reached it when the door of the room opened and the man stepped out whom he had seen standing by the bedside of his companion.

He had his hat on now, and in one hand the box which the watcher had before seen.

In the other he held a cane and umbrella and a sachel.

Placing these on the floor he locked the door from the outside and then came on toward the stairs.

As he reached them a tall form stepped to his side, a revolver-muzzle was pressed into his face, and a stern voice said:

"You are my prisoner, sir; resist and you are a dead man."

"You've got me foul, my man, so I yield," was the cool response.

"You are wise," and in an instant a manacle was slipped over one hand and the prisoner saw the other was about the wrist of his captor.

"Now, sir, I'll take that leather case, and you carry your other traps and come with me."

"Walk close and no one will suspect that you are a prisoner, and we will avoid a crowd at our heels."

"I obey, when I am forced to, and meet my master; but it is not often I find him," was the response in the same cool tone.

Then the two descended the stairs together, walked out of the office by the half-asleep night clerk and were in the street.

"It is but a block to the station," said the captor, as they passed out of the hotel, side by side, not one of the loungers about suspecting that a steel chain bound them together.

"I don't mind how far it is, only a word with you as we go along; so go slow, please."

The prisoner was as cool as an icicle, very gentlemanly in manner, and spoke with real respect to his captor.

"Well, sir?"

"You are a detective, I suppose?"

"I am acting as such just now."

"Well, did you shadow me from Europe?"

"No."

"How in Satan's claws did you suspect me, then?"

"You shall soon learn."

"Why have you arrested me?"

"As a diamond-thief, and perhaps a murderer."

The prisoner started at this, but said:

"Now you intend to give me up?"

"Certainly."

"It will be long imprisonment on the first charge you referred to, and the gallows on the latter for me."

"Yes."

"Now I take it you are not a rich man?"

"I am not."

"Well, I am willing to go halves with you for my release, and in that box you have are one hundred thousand dollars in gems."

"I know that, but they are not yours to divide, so come," and the captor led his prisoner on to the station.

CHAPTER XXII.

A MYSTERIOUS DETECTIVE.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS, Chief of the "Metropolitan Secret Service League" of New York, was just about to depart for his home, to get much-needed rest, when an attendant entered his private offices with word that an unknown officer had arrived with a prisoner of importance, and was in haste about seeing the chief.

A handsome man Chief Williams certainly was, with the look of a military commander in his fine uniform, which fitted his tall, athletic form to perfection.

His face was strongly marked, full of intelligence and stamped with undaunted courage.

It was a face, too, that was as good as a mask, for one could not look into it and read the man that possessed it.

"Ah, Boland, there is no rest for the wicked, it seems."

"Show him in," said Captain Williams, with a yawn and look of resignation.

A moment after two men entered, and a glance showed the chief that they were manacled together.

One was a heavily-built man, with blonde hair and mustache, blue eyes, and the type of a Londoner.

He carried in one hand a sachel, and in the other, which was manacled, an umbrella and walking stick.

The other was slender in build, six feet in height, broad shoulders, and possessed the physique of an athlete.

He was plainly dressed, wore eye-glasses and a full dark beard, while his hair clustered in waving masses beneath his slouch hat.

He might be taken for a soldier, a naval officer, or a student, but whichever one he was, his face was one to attract attention.

Both men cast a hasty glance about the handsomely-furnished rooms of the chief, and then a decidedly fixed one at the occupant, who was seated in his leather chair behind a desk.

Then the dark-faced man placed a leather case upon the desk before the chief and asked, in a voice that was deep and rich-toned:

"Do I address the chief of the Secret Service, sir?"

"You do, sir, so please state how I can serve you?"

Ere he could reply the blonde man spoke up quickly:

"It is I, sir, that asks your aid, for I am an English detective from Scotland Yard and shadowed this man over from London."

"I caught him robbing a diamond merchant in the Sturtevant House just now, so slipped the irons upon him and desire to surrender him to your keeping for the present."

The accused looked upon his accuser in a startled way.

He knew from the first that he had caught a Tartar, but to have him take such quick advantage of the situation, of discovering that he was not known to the Secret Service chief, for a moment took him aback.

He saw that the man made a bold play to escape, for, once freed of his manacles, and believed to be a detective from Scotland Yard, London, he could readily slip away.

The chief saw that something was amiss at a glance.

He was a deep reader of human nature, and one look into the faces of the two men had decided in his mind as they came toward him which was the prisoner.

He also was therefore nonplused at the charge of the one he had believed to be the culprit against the one he had looked upon as the detective.

Having heard the glib charge of the real culprit, he simply bowed and glanced toward the other, who was now perfectly cool, and said:

"I was anticipated, sir, in making the charge against this man which which he has against me, and which, seeing that I was not known to you, he took advantage of; but investigation will prove which is the culprit."

"My dear chief, this fellow is a cunning one, and too awfully clever."

"Those are the diamonds he stole in that case, and I will leave them and the prisoner in your keeping, while I return to my hotel and get my requisition papers to show you my authority."

The chief sat calmly gazing upon the two men, and he seemed to observe both of them with the same look.

His face was unreadable, and his silence ominous to the guilty one.

As the pretended English detective spoke he raised his ironed hand as though to unlock the manacles that bound him to the other.

And the other smiled, while he said:

"If this man is what he professes to be, chief, let him unlock these irons, for he must have the key."

The chief touched a bell, and an attendant appeared.

"Send two men here," he ordered, and a moment after they entered, the real prisoner meanwhile fumbling in his pockets, yet unable to find the key of course.

"What is your story, sir?" asked Captain Williams of the captor of the robber.

"I am a stranger in the city, sir, stopping at the Sturtevant House, and unable to sleep, I was seated in the dark at my window, which looks out upon an area, across which some ten feet, is the window of another room."

"I saw a servant escort this man, and a Jewish gentleman into the room, heard some conversation between them, which led me to infer one was a diamond merchant, the other a traveling acquaintance, and they had just arrived on the steamer from Europe."

"The other retired in a bed in full view of my window, taking this leather case with him, and this man turned down the light, and soon after I saw him approach his companion and hold his handkerchief over his face."

"I inhaled the odor of chloroform, saw a bottle in this man's hand, and so determined to act, as I felt there was need of it."

"I had a revolver and this pair of manacles in my valise, so got them and went around to the stairs, and arrested this man as he came out, his sachel here, the diamond case, which I heard

contains a hundred thousand dollars in gems, and the umbrella and cane in his hands.

"I have no authority for what I did, other than to capture the perpetrator of a crime, and I would advise that aid be at once rendered the gentleman who was the victim of my prisoner here.

"Shall I unlock the manacles?"

"Yes."

It was done in an instant, and the chief said: "Iron that man."

His two detectives obeyed, clapping the manacles upon the Englishman.

"One of you guard him here, and the other come with me."

"I will accompany you, sir, to the Sturtevant House, and he walked out of his office with the captor of the prisoner, and was followed by the man he bade accompany him, after an order had been given to have the police surgeon come at once to the hotel.

The night clerk woke up to the situation, when he saw a guest of the house enter with the Secret Service chief, and corroborated the story about the arrival of the two guests from a European steamer, and their having been assigned to a room together.

They then went to the room together, and found the diamond merchant in a deathlike sleep from the influence of the chloroform, but the police surgeon soon brought him around, and then the chief sought for the captor of the thief.

He was not to be found, and going to the office it was discovered that he had come down from his room, sachel in hand, paid his bill and departed.

What his mysterious conduct meant Captain Williams could not fathom.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TEMPTRESS.

"RUDOLPH SELDON, I do not believe one word you utter, when you tell me that you are glad to see me and meant to send for me."

The speaker was Di Seldon, the beautiful country girl whom Rudolph Seldon had supposed he had cleverly deceived, yet who had "run him to earth," so to speak.

She was in her disguise as a messenger boy, and threw herself carelessly into a chair as she spoke, her eyes glittering wickedly as she turned them upon the fugitive heir.

"You wrong me, Di, for I did intend to seek you and ask you to share my changed fortunes with me."

"I wronged you, as I believed, it is true, when I sought to bind you to me by a false marriage, and under an assumed name; but it was because I wished to be able to swear to my father that I was not bound to any woman."

"As soon as I had control of my property, then I could act for myself and make you my wife before the world."

"And you intend to do so now?"

There was something in the question that told him to beware.

He was playing with fire when he sought to deceive a second time a beautiful and dangerous woman, and one who was, he knew, really his wife.

So he said cautiously:

"I wish to acknowledge you as my wife, Di; but let me tell you that I am not in possession of my father's fortune."

"Why not?" she asked, with perfect calmness.

"The reason is a strange one, and maybe you can help me in it."

"I will do all I can, for I wish to live in luxury, and I look to you for the means."

"Well, my father's will reads me the heir, it is true; but there are two reasons why I cannot get the fortune."

"What are they?"

"First, some one poisoned my father upon his dying bed, and I alone was in the room that night, and as there was a belief, on account of my wild life, that he might change his will, I would naturally be suspected as the person, though I am innocent of the cruel deed, I pledge you my honor."

"Beg pardon—your what?"

"My honor."

"Ah! I had not discovered that virtue in your make-up; but pray continue your story."

He bit his lips in a vexed way, and continued: "Now, the doctor who made the discovery, and alone knows how my father died, demanded many thousands in hush-money from me, and I promised it to him."

"But do you recall the murder of Cashier Clark, of the Bank of D—, some time since?"

"Yes."

"Well, they found a man there whom they suspected and put in jail; but a detective got the tea into his head that I was the guilty one, and so dogged me to my home, and arrested me."

"I bought his silence, until I could prove an alibi; but in that fearful railroad accident a short while ago he was killed."

"Yet, he had told me I was in danger, as he had written to some one telling all his proofs of my guilt, to be opened upon a certain day, should he not return home."

"Now he was killed, and yet I dared not return to my home, for fear that some one would be there, and so I am a fugitive from my fortune, and how you tracked me here I do not know."

"Oh, never mind how I did that, so I am here; but do I understand that you give up your fortune?"

"I do, because I must."

"You dread being arrested for a crime?"

"Yes."

"Did you kill the cashier?"

"Why ask me such a cruel question?"

"Oh, I knew you were in great need of money, just about the time of his murder, and could not await the death of your father, who somehow clung on to life pretty well, and I did not know but that to get a large sum of money you might not care much for a life, you know, that stood in the way."

"Di, you are unjust, cruel; but I forgive you, because I love you."

"I am glad to hear it, Rudolph, and you have—excepting that mock-marriage and the little matter of desertion of me, treated me well, for you lavished many gifts of value upon me, bought with your money won with cards; but now to this unfortunate charge of murder against you, a double murder in fact, with the detective's laying the cashier's death at your door, and the doctor accusing you of poisoning your father?"

"You mean what am I going to do about it?"

"Just that."

"I dare not go to claim my inheritance, for I am sure that the one whom the detective wrote, will arrest me."

"True, and if not, the doctor would control your purse-strings?"

"Yes, though he might be gotten rid of, while this unknown possessor of the detective's secret I cannot place hands upon."

"I see, and hence you are a fugitive?"

"Just about it, Di."

"You have some money?"

"A few thousands."

"What do you consider a few thousands?"

"I have ten thousand dollars which I got from my attorney."

"And I have a couple of thousand laid up, which you gave me, with considerable more in jewels, so we need not despair, especially as you have brains, a courteous address, superior education, and life before you for work."

"Bah! I hate work."

"Oh, I do not mean manual labor, my dear Rudolph, unless you consider card-playing such, and the truth is you have been very lucky with the pasteboards, and, by a little sleight-of-hand, you know, might be more so."

"Do you mean by cheating?" he asked, angrily.

"There now, Rudolph, don't get angry at a trifle; but it is just what I do mean."

"Let me plan for you, my dear, and I will make your fortune."

"You see you are a fugitive, at least until you know whether it is safe for you to venture to return home and claim your inheritance."

"Now you know it is reported that you left home and mysteriously disappeared, and are believed to have been murdered, or accidentally killed, for no one can understand that an heir has run away from a large fortune."

"You know that it is so reported?" he asked, suspiciously.

"Oh yes, for I feared you would play me false, Rudolph, and so, when you left me in Chicago, to go to your dying father, I disguised myself and went, too."

"In fact, I kept pretty well on your track, as you see, to find you here."

"But to my plan."

"I am anxious to hear it," he said, with the manner of a man who was resigned to the fact that he had met his match in the woman before him.

"Of course you are therefore a fugitive, and it will not do for you to be recognized, so you must play a bold game for life and gold, for it is such a disgrace on one's name to be hanged, you know."

He shuddered at the reminder of what might be his fate, while she smiled and then continued in her soft-toned, lazy way of speaking, yet so full of cynicism and sarcasm:

"You must not play an inferior part, with your talents and good looks, nor will it do to make money by the hundreds."

"So pull yourself together, Rudolph, nerve yourself to work, and I will put you in the way of winning thousands upon the turn of a card."

"I do not believe you."

"Try me, for much is possible to a woman who wills it and has the nerve to execute."

"You are beautiful, dangerous, daring, Di, I admit, but how you are to aid me in making a fortune I cannot understand—that is, outside of the slow way of money-making on a small capital."

"Will you trust me?"

"I will."

"Obey me in all things?"

"Yes."

"Then, Rudolph Seldon, you will be a rich man soon before the world, though to get your gold you may be, *sub rosa*, a King of Crooks."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE UNCLAIMED INHERITANCE.

WHEN Ernest Wilber awoke from the deep slumber into which the drug had put him, his mind was dazed, and his head ached and reeled.

Several times he made an effort to arise from the bed, upon which he had fallen, before he was able to do so.

But at last he in part collected his strength and benumbed senses and sat up.

He was weak and ill, but with an effort tottered to the table and took a long draught from a pitcher of water that stood there.

Then he buried his head in the wash-bowl and gradually overcame the nausea and pain he suffered.

Approaching the window he threw up the sash and sat down.

The crisp morning air aided in reviving him, and his mind went back slowly over all that had happened from his coming to the mansion the day before.

The sun shone brightly, the grass and leaves glistened with raindrops, and the birds sung merrily amid the foliage.

All about the mansion seemed as quiet as the grave, but from the distant town came the pealing of a church-bell, and he recalled that it was the Sabbath day.

"I remember all now, and that I was overcome suddenly and fell upon the bed."

"Yes, the wine I drank had been drugged."

"That was before midnight last night, and now the church-bells are ringing."

He arose and went to the chair where he had placed his coat and vest.

He knew that they had been tampered with, and glancing at his watch to note the time, he hastily felt in his pocket for his keys.

He found them, but not in the pocket where he always kept them, and his roll of banknotes, which had not been enough to tempt the man who had drugged him, lay on the table.

"I understand all now."

"I was drugged by Rudolph Seldon to get my keys that he might open the safe."

"He did not know about the combination lock, so all there is safe, I hope."

"I will at once know the worst."

He rung the bell, and Dorlan soon appeared and, with a polite good-morning, said:

"You slept late, sir, for you; but I wouldn't call you."

"Yes; but where is your master, Dorlan?"

"He has not returned, sir."

"Ah! then he left last night?"

"Yes, sir; at midnight the coachman says, with his buggy and pair of bays."

"I see; he did not wait until morning, then, but I suppose he felt that he had better go."

"I will come out to breakfast soon, and then wish to drive to town, Dorlan."

The servant departed, and finishing dressing himself Lawyer Wilber entered the library and hastily opened the safe.

"Thank Heaven he failed in getting in here," he said, and then a note on the desk caught his eye.

It was addressed to him, and read:

"I am gone, and for an indefinite time."

"You are responsible for my fortune left in your keeping, and even though my mysterious disappearance may cause many to believe I am dead, you must not forget that some day I will return, though forced now to fly from my inheritance."

"RUDOLPH SELDON."

The lawyer smiled grimly as he read this note, and then placing it in the safe went out and ate a really hearty breakfast.

Then he drove to his own home in town and devoted himself to certain neglected business.

Days passed into weeks, and the rumor went about of Rudolph Seldon's mysterious disappearance, and soon after the townspeople were shocked to see in the papers the following advertisement:

"FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD!"

"Disappeared most mysteriously one month ago from his home of Seldon Hall, Rudolph Seldon, son and heir of the late Judge Leslie Seldon."

"The said Rudolph left his home on the night of the twentieth of last month, leaving word that he was temporarily called away."

"He drove to the railway station of Elgin, thirty miles away, and then left his horses while he took the train for the city, since which time he has not been seen or heard from, and can be traced no further."

"The above reward will be paid for information regarding the present whereabouts of the said Rudolph Seldon, or if foully dealt with, any clew leading to the apprehension of his murderers."

"ERNEST WILBER."

"Attorney at Law and Executor Seldon Estate."

But the offer of this generous reward brought no response to be relied upon, and weeks passed by and the heir did not return nor was he heard from.

Ernest Wilber, however, found the affair an advertisement for himself, and his business increased steadily.

To the better care for the unclaimed inheritance, he moved out to Seldon Hall and made his home there.

And there, one Sunday afternoon, he had a visitor.

It was, to his surprise, a lady, and he entered the parlors, whither Dorian had shown her, wondering why she had called upon him then and on Sunday.

He saw a tall, well-formed woman, dressed in deep mourning and heavily veiled, and she was standing by the window, gazing out upon the handsome grounds as he entered, but turned toward him, and said in a low voice:

"Lawyer Wilber, I believe?"

"Yes, madam, and may I ask who I have the honor of meeting?"

"A name is a small matter, sir, so we will dispense with mine; but pardon me for calling on you here, and let my earnest desire to find the heir of this grand home be my excuse."

"Be seated, madam, and let me know if you have news of Mr. Seldon."

"None, for I came to you for news of him."

"I have a standing reward of five thousand dollars in the papers for him."

"I have seen it, but is it not a blind?"

"I am at a loss to understand you."

"Do you not really know where Mr. Seldon is?"

"Upon my honor, no!"

The eyes beneath the veil, impenetrable to the lawyer, seemed to be reading the face of Ernest Wilber, and as though satisfied, the visitor said:

"I can but believe you, sir; but as I would like to earn your very generous reward, and as you seem anxious to find Mr. Seldon, pray help me to do so."

"With all my heart, madam; but what is he to you more than your desire to get the reward?"

"I had not said that he was anything to me other than the price offered for him; but as you seem to read one well, I will say that he is one whom I knew in the past, and am most anxious to find, and more, whom I sincerely hope is not dead."

"When did you see him last?"

"A few nights before he left home, according to your advertisement."

"Where, may I ask?"

"That I care not to tell you, Mr. Wilber."

"As you please; but I fear I cannot help you, madam, though I only wish that I could."

"Tell me if you know of any reasons why he should thus mysteriously absent himself from home and leave his fortune unclaimed."

"If he had reasons he would not communicate them to me, while, as I hold his purse-strings, his fortune in fact, he certainly, if alive, would communicate with me unless he had some decided reason for not doing so."

"I think you are right, Mr. Wilber, and I feel that you can give me no information regarding Mr. Seldon, so I will take my leave, with the hope of soon returning to you and claiming the reward you offer."

"It will be paid, madam, if you bring the information advertised for," was the response of the lawyer, and he bowed in response to the very gracious parting salute of his visitor, whose face he had not seen, and escorted her to her carriage.

As he aided her to her seat in the vehicle, he slightly started, for he suddenly discovered a strange circumstance for a woman.

"She has but one arm!" he almost said aloud, as the vehicle drove away.

That afternoon he drove into town to discover who his strange visitor was; but he could only find out that she had arrived that morning, and was registered at the hotel simply as:

"Miss Richards."

She had left town by the noonday train, and so all trace of her was lost.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COWBOY ADONIS.

It would have taken a very close student of physiognomy to see in a handsome horseman in buckskin, riding leisurely over a flower-spangled prairie of Texas, the same person who, clad in the dress of a female, had been known six months before as the counterfeiter, Howard Burns, as he was then seen at the hotel with Octave Archer and the traitor jail-keeper, Henry Barney.

Then he had really looked what his disguise represented him, a woman; but now his face has bronzed and become tinted with the rich blood of health, and his hair has grown long and falls upon the collar of his buckskin hunting-shirt.

He wears leggings, top-boots and a sombrero, and looks out and out the Texan cowboy that he has become.

A mustache shades his mouth, and his handsome face and almost dandified appearance have already gained for him among the prairiemen the sobriquet of "The Cowboy Adonis."

Ahead of him, on a well-timbered ridge, the base of which is washed by a winding stream, can be seen a frontier home.

It is a pleasant spot, superior to the ordinary border homesteads, in that it has an air of general comfort about it and looks indeed like a home where dwell contentment and even luxury for that far frontier.

Upon the piazza, rude but broad and inviting, sat a matron, while a young girl of fifteen

was seated near her, a school-book in hand, and a lad of twelve sat upon the steps, both studying under their mother's teaching.

"There comes brother Harvey," suddenly called out the boy, as his eyes roaming oftener over the prairie than upon his book, he beheld the horseman approaching.

The mother and sister looked up and the former said:

"I am glad he is coming, for I am anxious about this letter he has received, bearing the New York post-mark," and the mother's face wore a look of anxiety.

In the mean time the horseman came on at a canter, drew rein near the cabin, and taking off his saddle and bridle let his horse loose.

"Well, mother, I found the herd, and it had strayed a long way off; but the boys are coming with it," said Harvey Howard, as he was known in his new home, and he affectionately greeted his mother and sister, and turning to his brother asked:

"Well, Ralph, how goes it?"

"The ranch is all right, brother, but this lesson is awful hard, and I wish you and mother would make a cowboy out of me instead of a scholar," returned the lad who was more fond of his pony than his books.

"We wish to have one scholar in the family, Ned, and as I am a cowboy you must be that one," replied Harvey Howard, and he took a letter which his mother had just brought from the house with the remark:

"Nick brought this yesterday when he returned with the stores from San Antonio, my son, and I confess to some anxiety as to its contents."

There seemed nothing out of the way in one receiving a letter, and yet Harvey Howard's face changed color as he took the one which his mother handed to him.

He glanced at the address and then with a sigh broke the seal.

The son had joined his mother on the ranch she had purchased, after his escape from prison, and since then they were living a most secluded life.

They had a home where certainly happiness should dwell, and all was prosperous with them; but yet a shadow hung over them which the mother and son could not shake off.

The younger members of the family, Maude and Ralph, knew of their brother's arrest for counterfeiting, but they supposed he had been tried and found guiltless.

Maude was a girl of remarkably good sense and very pretty, while she was a great help to her mother, who told her just how matters stood, a few days before the arrival of this important letter, and that they had hidden themselves upon the prairies of Texas to escape being found out by officers of the law.

With no interest in the letter, and excused from his books, Ralph went off to amuse himself, while Harvey read the letter aloud to his mother, seemingly unconscious of Maude's presence.

"It is from Mr. Archer, mother," he said with a look of pleasure, for he had become sincerely attached to his fellow-prisoner the short while they had known each other.

Then he read the letter, which was as follows:

"MY DEAR HOWARD:—

"When you gave me your address, I felt that the day would come when I would wish to write to you, and it has done so sooner than I expected."

"We were fellow unfortunates together, and I feel that you, like myself, are under a cloud of suspicion, not guilt."

"I also feel that I owe you my life for, but for your giving me the warning you did, that Barney had been treacherous to me, I would have been arrested and tried, and that meant the worst for me, as surely I could not prove my innocence."

"Since leaving you I have decided upon a plan of action, and as you told me you would never know real rest while the brand of infamy rested upon you, and would give much to prove yourself innocent of the crime you are charged with, I now ask you to come on and join me in the good work."

"We can work together and do much for I know your nerve and how much you can aid me, and in working for our common good, we will in the end bring triumph to both, I feel assured."

"I am here in New York, and here I wish you to come, and sincerely trust that you can do so."

"It should be impossible, then I shall undertake your case, with mine, and work it out to success; but I rely upon you to come to me."

"If in need, I can aid you to a limited amount, and if you desire funds for the support of those dependent upon you, it can be arranged."

"Pardon me for touching upon this matter, but I am unaware of your financial status, and am anxious to have no excuse that can be overcome in the way of your joining me."

"Write me soon as possible of your intention, and address me as per card within, and at the same place you will find me upon your arrival, so ask for the name I give you, as I am not known by my own."

"My kind remembrances to your good mother, who, in aiding you, did also much for me, in fact more than for you, as an ignominious death threatened me."

"I hope your lot has been a prosperous and contented one, though I feel that, with myself, it will be impossible for you to know happiness until the stain is removed from your fair name."

"Expecting an early response, believe me, my friend in misfortune, Sincerely yours,

"OCTAVE ARCHER."

When Harvey Howard finished reading the letter the eyes of his mother were fixed eagerly upon him, and she said, earnestly:

"That is a noble man, Harvey."

"He is, mother, and I have always told you how much I thought of him."

"And what will be your answer, my son?"

"The ranch is progressing prosperously, mother," and it was more of an assertion than a question.

"Yes, Harvey."

"You have Ralph and Maude with you."

"True."

"And old Vance and his wife here at the cabin, with the four cowboys to look after the cattle and farming."

"Yes, my son."

"And, mother, I do wish to remove the shadow of this crime from off my young life."

"You are right, Harvey, and I uphold you in your noble wish."

"Then I will go, mother."

"Yes; but I fear you will have to face many dangers, my son, and, worst of all, be recognized."

"I have that fear here constantly, mother, and I long to have the suspense over with."

"I will go."

A week after the Cowboy Adonis left his prairie home for New York.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DIAMOND-MERCHANT.

"WHAT does it all mean?"

So asked Mr. Isaac Lindo, the diamond-merchant, as he gazed into the face of the police surgeon, bending over him as he lay upon his bed in the Sturtevant House.

His senses were bewildered, and he passed his hand over his brow as though he suffered there.

"It means, sir, that I have just brought you back from the brink of the grave, for you were nearly gone when I arrived," answered the surgeon.

"Ah! it was the gas, then; but I left it to Ravenfield to turn it down."

"He surely should have known how; but, my God! is he dead?" and Mr. Lindo glanced anxiously toward the other bed.

"If you refer to your friend, I will answer that he is not dead."

"Yes, my friend Roger Ravenfield, of England, who came with me here on the steamer last night, if it was last night, for how long have I been ill?"

"You arrived about eleven o'clock at night, did you not?"

"Yes."

"It is now four, and you have been under the influence of chloroform for some four hours."

"Chloroform?"

"Yes."

"Why, sir, it is impossible; but I am all bewildered."

"Permit me at once to explain, sir."

"You came here from the steamer last night, in company with a gentleman whom you refer to as Mr. Roger Ravenfield, and you were assigned this room together."

"We were."

"Well, he is no more nor less than an English crook, who dogged you here to America to rob you and very nearly was successful."

Mr. Lindo gave utterance to a startled cry and grasped at the spot where he had left his leather case.

"My diamonds!" he gasped, as his face became livid.

"Are safe, sir, for they are in the hands of the chief of the Secret Service, Captain Williams, and he also has Roger Ravenfield in safe keeping, for he is the man who attempted to rob you."

"I cannot believe it, sir, for he brought letters of introduction to me from a particular friend, and—"

"Forgeries, doubtless, sir; but do not worry, for you need rest, and I have prepared a soothing draught here for you, and you can sleep until late breakfast, and I will call and take you round to the chief's headquarters where you can learn all."

Mr. Lindo was too weak to resist, and taking the medicine he soon sunk into a refreshing sleep and was left to the care of a hotel-servant.

But at ten o'clock the surgeon returned and found him dressed and breakfasting.

He had learned but little from the servant, so greeted the surgeon eagerly, and the two went around to headquarters.

Captain Williams was in his office looking over his mail, but greeted the diamond merchant courteously and said:

"I congratulate you, sir, upon your escape from death and robbery, for it was a narrow escape, and all owing to an accident, which caused a stranger to be sitting at his window in the dark opposite to your room."

"Pray tell me all about the affair, sir," said Mr. Lindo.

This the chief did in his terse way, and the diamond merchant was most thankful for his escape from death, for so full of the drug had the room become, as the robber had left the glass stopper out of the bottle of chloroform.

either by accident or on purpose, that, but for the arrival of the surgeon, he would have been past recovery.

"Captain Williams, my fortune and my honor are in that leather case," said Mr. Lindo, feelingly, pointing to the leather box which the chief had taken from his safe.

"You have said the stranger told you there were a hundred thousand in gems in the case, as he overheard me say."

"Yes, sir, he named that sum."

"Well, sir, I have that sum, purchased for myself, it is true, but I have even a larger sum of purchases I made for others, and fifty thousand in jewels ordered for a bridal present for a daughter of one of our millionaires in the city."

"You can see, then, in that he saved me over a quarter of a million, every dollar of which would have been lost to me, for I would have paid all, though it would have left me penniless."

"Then, sir, I owe to this stranger my life, far more to be prized than gold, so I hope that he is a poor man, as it will be my greatest pleasure to place in his hands a check for twenty-five thousand dollars."

"Mr. Lindo, you are most generous, and just what I expected of you, you have done, for you are known to me by character, if not personally, before to-day, permit me to say; but the stranger still remains a stranger, for he mysteriously departed while I was at your bedside."

"But he was a guest at the hotel, you said?"

"He was, but he paid his bill and departed while I was in your room."

"But can be found through his name on the register?"

"He is registered as 'D. Dewhurst California,' that is all."

"But he cannot have left town?"

"Doubtless not; but the clerk said he had been only a few days at the hotel, arrived at night, and was a very quiet man."

"He had a sachel only, and seemed to have no acquaintances in the city, as no one called upon him, I have learned."

"But the motive for leaving?"

"There may be two motives."

"Well, Captain Williams?"

"One to avoid notoriety, he being in good circumstances, and not caring to be paid for what he did."

"And the other?"

"He may be a man anxious, for some reason best known to himself, to avoid being recognized."

"But what reason?"

"Perhaps a fugitive from justice."

"Ah! but then, why would he protect me from robbery as he did?"

"He need not be a criminal, though hiding from the law; but he certainly had a good motive to avoid, as he has, becoming known, and to solve the mystery for my own satisfaction I have put the affair into the hands of every man of my force to find him."

"I am glad of that, for he must not go unrewarded, and I cannot believe he has done wrong and is hiding."

"Time will show, sir; but we will advertise also for him, to give him a chance to see the reward you wish to give, and others, to whom he may speak of the affair, to betray him to us."

"But now let me ask you about this Mr. Roger Ravenfield?"

"He came to me in Paris with letters from friends traveling in Europe, and was said to be a rich young Englishman going to America to enter into business, and rather leaned toward the diamond line."

"Yes, he leaned a long way in that direction," dryly said the chief, and he added:

"But come, see if this is your man."

The prisoner was brought in, and with one glance at him Isaac Lindo said:

"That is the man, Roger Ravenfield."

"Yes, chappie, old boy, how are you? Come to bail me out?" said the prisoner, with a smile and manner that fairly paralyzed the diamond merchant.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

WHEN the prisoner, Roger Ravenfield, spoke to Ike Lindo, as his intimates called the diamond merchant, addressing him in the familiar manner of old friendship, he was quite taken aback.

He had expected to see his friend and fellow-traveler completely crushed with his situation, but instead the prisoner came up smiling, and with an air of nonchalance that was refreshing.

Mr. Lindo was not accustomed to the very great wickedness of the world.

He was a man of honor, liberal-minded and generous-hearted, not only financially but toward sinners, and he found it hard to believe that one who had been his friend, had traveled with him, could have been playing a part simply to rob him, and in reality had not cared much whether he killed him or not.

Now he turned to the chief for an explanation of the affair.

Captain Williams, accustomed as he was to

the ways of criminals, was slightly nonplused by the gigantic "cheek"—if I may so put it—of the prisoner.

"Do you recognize this man, Mr. Lindo, as your traveling companion?" he asked of the diamond merchant.

Before Mr. Lindo could respond, the prisoner said:

"Certainly he recognizes me, and more, has come to prove me innocent of this infamous charge, or to bail me out if I must stand trial."

"I am rejoiced to see you were not materially harmed by that fellow's drugging you, Lindo, and was fortunate enough to catch him before he got away with your diamonds, though the chief here accepts his story against mine."

"Come, chief, knock off these irons now, that my friend is here to vouch for me."

Captain Williams was taken aback.

He was a man never taken at a disadvantage, but this time he was decidedly bewildered by the man before him.

Then Mr. Lindo said sternly:

"Ravenfield, you were the one who robbed me, and I am here to identify you as my traveling companion, and the diamond thief."

Both the chief and Mr. Lindo saw the start of the prisoner, at the words addressed to him, and he cried excitedly:

"My God! Lindo, have you turned against me too?"

"Do you also believe this thief's story against mine?"

The man's words and manner were so sincere, so earnest, that the merchant said:

"Chief Williams, can there not be some mistake?"

"Let me hear your story, sir," said Captain Williams, who began to fear that after all there might have been a mistake made, for a sudden thought flashed into his mind that was by no means a pleasant one.

"You tried and sentenced me in your mind, chief, before you heard my story, and so I was placed in this cell, while the criminal was allowed to go, and cannot now doubtless be found."

The chief winced at this, for he knew that such was the case with the man who had brought the prisoner there.

"To your story, sir," he said sternly.

"I will tell it with pleasure, and beg Mr. Lindo to correct me when I err."

"As I told you, I am a detective from Scotland Yard, but should have said an amateur one, not professional, for I got papers to work on an interesting case of my own a year ago."

"I am a gentleman, possess means, and decided to come to America and enter into business, so spoke of doing so to a friend, who at once gave me a letter to Mr. Lindo, who received me most kindly, and we became friends and traveling companions, having been together now for two months."

"Mr. Lindo will tell you that I told him of the case which gained for me a detective's badge, see, I have it here," and he showed under his coat a gold badge on which was the coat-of-arms of Great Britain, and the words engraven:

"SECRET-SERVICE CORPS."

The chief examined the badge and the prisoner continued:

"Mr. Lindo retired, leaving me up, and as I got ready to go to bed, I missed my gold-headed cane, a present that I highly prize, so I slipped on my clothes to go to the office and have inquiry made of the coachman who drove us from the steamer, feeling assured that I had left it in the carriage."

"I lost my way in the long and numerous corridors, and roved about for quite a while, when, just as I found the main stairs, for the elevator had ceased running, I recollected that I had left the cane in my state-room on a rack over the door, so returned."

"I entered the room to start back, fearing I had made a mistake, for I saw a gentlemanly fellow there, and was almost suffocated by the fumes of chloroform."

"But in an instant I realized the situation, and springing forward captured my man."

"There is little more to tell, other than that I brought him here, ironed to my own arm, when he forestalled me and I was looked upon as the thief."

"Am I not right, chief?"

Captain Williams hardly knew what to say. If he had acted hastily, he regretted it, and yet of the two men he felt that the one before him bore the look of a criminal, where the other's face was one to trust.

But he remembered that nature often played such pranks with the human face divine.

So he looked to Mr. Lindo to see what he thought of the situation.

He was not long left in doubt, for that gentleman said:

"Captain Williams, I fear there has been a sad mistake here."

"I know there has been, and I am the victim, for I found the man, as stated, in our room, and he doubtless took advantage of my leaving, and what he overheard from his window, to enter and commit the bold robbery."

"If I had chloroform, I could not have

bought it here, so the bottle will have the name of some New York druggist upon it."

"No, it is unmarked," said the chief, who had examined it.

"If I mistake not, there is a fire-escape out of the windows, and a bold man could swing himself across the narrow space and enter the room."

"Ravenfield, I am convinced that you have been wronged, and I crave your pardon for my doubt of you," said Lindo warmly, his heart touched by the distress of his friend.

"I thank you, Lindo; but send for this man who accuses me and talk with him, and see if I have not been cruelly dealt with."

"The man has left the hotel bag and baggage," said Mr. Lindo.

"Is this so, chief?" quickly asked the prisoner.

"It is, sir."

"My God! why do you still hold me prisoner then for does his flight not prove his guilt?"

And the voice of the prisoner rung out through the station-house with indignation and anger.

"He has gone, I admit, and it is a most suspicious circumstance against him, while, if Mr. Lindo will vouch for you, sir, and make no charge, I can but release you at once, with deep regret, if you are innocent, that the arrest was made."

"I was brought here by a man who told you he had no power to arrest me."

"True, sir; but your release rests with Mr. Lindo."

And it was evident that the chief was not convinced, though in a quandary.

"Release him," said Mr. Lindo, decidedly.

Ten minutes after the two friends left the station-house together, and Chief Williams touched a bell.

"Send Detective Boland to me."

A moment after that officer appeared.

"You saw the man who just went out in company with Mr. Lindo?"

"Yes, sir."

"They have returned together to the Sturtevant House, and I wish you to go there and follow the Englishman."

"Do not lose sight of him for an instant, and if you need further help send for it and I will give you as many men as are necessary."

"Draw five hundred from the cashier and start at once; but he must not suspect he is being shadowed."

"I understand, sir."

And Detective Boland was soon shadowing Mr. Roger Ravenfield of the London Secret Service Corps.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RIGHT OR WRONG?

THE morning following the release of Mr. Roger Ravenfield, the papers contained an account of the affair, and some unkindly criticised Captain Williams for his having made the mistake of arresting the wrong man, and insulting an English gentleman as he had.

Mr. Lindo was congratulated upon saving his jewels and his life, and he came out with a reward of twenty-five thousand dollars for the capture and conviction of the diamond thief.

Those who were anxious to distinguish themselves and gain a small fortune at one and the same time, at once started on the hunt for the fugitive robber.

But Captain Williams made no other effort to find him than those which he had already entered upon.

He had cabled across the ocean, to the chief at London, and was awaiting reply very patiently.

He had sent a very explicit dispatch, as follows:

"A man calling himself Detective Roger Ravenfield, of London, came to America last night in company with a New York diamond-merchant, whom he met abroad, carrying letters of introduction from a mutual friend."

"The two traveled together and slept in same room at hotel night of arrival here."

"Diamond-merchant was chloroformed and robbed, and two men came to me ironed together."

"Each accused the other, and I held said Ravenfield."

"Other left mysteriously, and diamond-merchant refused to bring charge against his friend, so he was released."

"I have Ravenfield shadowed now, for I believe he is the guilty one."

"Answer fully if you know such man. He wears gold badge of office, and states it was given him for working up a robbery case of his own."

The captain was well tired out, and was again about to leave his office for his home, when a messenger entered.

He brought a note which read:

"Am taken seriously ill. Send another man to me and will instruct him."

BOLAND."

Another detective was sent with the messenger to relieve the officer, and again Captain Williams was starting home, when a cablegram was placed in his hands.

He stepped beneath the chandelier and read:

"Roger Ravenfield, detective, was on the force two years ago, and won fame and badge for services."

"Was on an important case, shadowing a man in Paris, and disappeared mysteriously, supposed to be murdered, and never since heard of."

"Was a small man, black hair and eyes, and scar on left cheek—weight about 140 pounds, height five feet seven—was Scotch."

"Man he was shadowing was Englishman, five feet ten, weight about 180, blue eyes, blonde hair and well-formed. A gambler, a clever linguist and full of nerve."

"His crime was robbing ladies of their jewels. If man answering name of Roger Ravenfield answers last one described, hold him for photograph and letters."

Captain Williams smiled blandly as he read this.

"I guess I am not wrong, after all."

"I like to see a paper take back its charges, and maybe some will have to retract their assertions regarding me."

While the greater part of the victorious crews were busying themselves with clearing the decks, the two bow-guns were again brought into play upon the retreating pirates, who, however, escaped into the cover of a narrow strait.

"This man whom I held answers to description of the man the Scotch detective was shadowing, and is not in any particular like the one whose name he has assumed."

"I am sorry Boland is ill, so I will put more men on the track of this man, for he must not escape."

"Lucas is a good man, but he has a failing, and if he drinks, he is worse than no one."

He rung his bell and asked for two men of his force.

Both were away.

"Well, to-morrow will have to do, as I have no one else to send, and Lucas will doubtless keep sober until then," and the chief went home feeling pleased with the boomerang he had in his pocket, in the cablegram of the London Secret Service Chief.

While the chief went homeward, Detective Lucas made his way with the messenger to an up-town hotel, whither Mr. Roger Ravenfield had removed during the day, for he had declined Mr. Lindo's kind invitation to become his guest for a few weeks at his house.

He had secured a pleasant suite of rooms at the hotel, and paid for them for a couple of weeks in advance, asking no deduction of the price.

His trunks had arrived from the steamer, and he seemed to prepare himself for quite a long stay at the hotel, greatly to the delight of the landlord, who saw in him a very liberal guest.

Detective Boland had arrived at the hotel about the same time and engaged a room by the month.

He had seemed to be hard to please, and the clerk had changed his room for him four times before he was satisfied, and that meant that he at last got one next door to the man whom he was shadowing.

His seat was also next to Mr. Ravenfield in the dining-room, and Mr. Boland found him his vis-à-vis at dinner.

Detective Boland was a man to adapt himself to people and circumstances.

He was a jovial fellow when need be, and serious as an undertaker when there was a reason for it.

He was courtly in manner, and ordering a bottle of wine at dinner, he asked his companion, who was just looking over the wine card, to join him in drinking with him.

Mr. Roger Ravenfield consented, though a little stiffly.

He was English, you know, so was careful about making acquaintances without their being vouched for by some one whom he already had vouchers for.

But, under the influence of the wine, the Englishman warmed considerably, and invited Mr. Boland to smoke with him in his rooms after dinner.

The invitation was accepted, and Mr. Roger Ravenfield really was charmed with his new acquaintance, or seemed to be.

But later on Mr. Boland was taken quite ill, with an attack of indigestion it seemed, for he was seized with dizziness and suffered much.

He said he would write a note to a friend to come and see him, and he did so.

This friend returned in the person of Detective Lucas.

He found Detective Boland in his room really quite ill, and had just time to tell him about the man he was shadowing, when that person entered.

"I was anxious about you, and hearing voices, knew you were not asleep, so dropped in," he said.

Mr. Boland introduced Mr. Ravenfield to Mr. Lucas, and then took another dose of medicine left him by the doctor, after which he sunk into a deep sleep.

In the mean time, Detective Lucas found the Englishman a charming companion, and began to feel that for once the chief was on the wrong scent, and he was the more convinced of it when Mr. Ravenfield said:

"Our friend is sleeping at last, so come into my room and have a bottle of champagne with me."

"I always have a bottle before retiring, and I ordered up a salad also, so come."

Detective Lucas loved champagne above all things; but he was acquainted with himself, so politely declined.

Mr. Ravenfield, however, urged, said the waiter had iced a quart bottle for him instead of a pint, and he would not have it destroyed, and so Detective Lucas yielded, and accompanied the Englishman to his rooms.

In doing so, Detective Lucas made a mistake.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. RAVENFIELD PLAYS TO WIN.

WHEN Roger Ravenfield wished, he could be the most entertaining of men.

He was a handsome fellow, as far as face and fine physique went, but it was not a face to win if studied.

There was something behind it very treacherous, very devilish and sinister.

His smile was sinister rather than pleasing, if analyzed.

But he did not give one a chance to study him.

He seemed to know his own failing, and that to a good reader of human nature he was labeled.

At telling a good story he was an adept, and he never allowed his friend's glass to get empty.

Detective Lucas was not as experienced as was Detective Boland, and so he felt sure that Captain Williams was on the wrong tack.

He found Mr. Ravenfield too genial a gentleman for a thief, and more, the running away of the man who had made the charge of robbery against the Englishman seemed to be positive proof that he had but played a bold game to escape.

In fact, Mr. Lucas was not alone in his suspicion that the noted Secret Service chief had "jumped the track" in this diamond case, for Detective Boland was about the only one of his men who asserted:

"The governor is right; wait and see."

Detective Lucas believed that a quart bottle held a quart, until on that night, and then he discovered that he was wrong, for somehow the bottle was emptied, and it appeared as though he had had but very little of its contents.

But another bottle, iced, was on the way up to "Number B," and a knock at the door made Mr. Lucas's eyes sparkle like champagne, when he saw that there was one bottle on the cooler, and an extra one ready to take its place.

The salad was excellent, the celery crisp, and the champagne just the right temperature.

Mr. Lucas was charmed. He felt at peace with God and man, and just then would have been willing to die, he seemed in such an ecstasy of delight.

"He seemed already to have 'a crown upon his forehead,' and the 'golden slippers' upon his feet."

If there was an odd taste in the wine, he was not conscious of it, and so he went on until three bottles had been emptied, and his host suggested that they should have a "Scotch whisky" of his brewing.

Mr. Lucas was willing.

He had forgotten the existence of Detective Boland next door, and lived only in the present.

"This is a night-cap, remember," said Mr. Ravenfield blandly.

"Just the night-caps I always wear," Mr. Lucas replied softly.

"Your friend is asleep, so you can retire, as he will not wake up before morning."

"I have some work to do, so you can lie on my bed."

"My dear friend," murmured Detective Lucas, and that moment he would have voted for the repeal of the law which would not allow one born out of the country to be President of the United States.

The Scotch whisky was a perfect concoction, and Detective Lucas drank it with the remark:

"A night-cap, you know."

"Yes, I know," was the answer, and a moment after Mr. Lucas did not know anything, for he had staggered into the bedroom and was lost to all consciousness.

But Mr. Roger Ravenfield had not taken the "night-cap," nor had he drunk much wine.

His head was perfectly cool, and he seemed to know just what he was about.

Entering the bedroom, he soon returned with some clothing over his arm, and then he went to the chamber next his own. Approaching the bed where Detective Boland lay he laid his hand upon his pulse.

"All right," he muttered.

Then he dropped from a vial a few drops of liquid into the glass of medicine that stood near, and turning to the lounge he, with a pillow and other things, soon made what appeared to be a man upon the lounge.

The clothing of Detective Lucas caused it to appear as though it might be he, with his face turned to the wall.

Detective Lucas's hat was then placed upon the table by the side of Detective Boland's, and Mr. Roger Ravenfield muttered:

"If he wakes up he'll think Lucas is asleep, take a dose of medicine, and drop off again himself, and he is good for hours."

He seemed to have prophesied well, for soon Detective Boland did rouse himself, and there sat his new-found friend reading, while over in

the shadow lay what appeared to be Detective Lucas.

"How do you feel?" softly asked the Englishman.

"Better, but very dizzy yet. I'll take another dose of medicine; but I wish you would not sit up."

"Oh, I am interested in reading, and told your friend to rest awhile, and he is fast asleep."

Detective Boland was as cunning as a fox; but he was ill, weak, and so had not the strength to think, and dropped off to sleep once more.

The Englishman waited for some minutes, and then arose and looked through the clothing of Detective Boland.

He found there a roll of bills, a watch and chain, and taking them he returned to his room, locking the door after him.

He then opened a trunk and took out various articles of apparel, and a small sachel.

Stepping before the mirror he shaved close, and then cut his blonde hair himself almost to a shave, and he did it skillfully as a barber might.

Then he took from the sachel a wig of dark hair, and fitted it onto his head with a perfection that was really artistic.

His fair complexion was then bronzed with cosmetics, and a dark, bushy mustache was then glued upon his upper lip in a way that would defy detection as to its being false.

Eye-glasses further disguised him, and a suit of clothes wholly different from those he had been wearing completed his make-up, and even the keen eyes of Detective Boland could not have believed him the man he had been sent to shadow, had he been aroused to perfect consciousness.

Then Mr. Ravenfield very deliberately opened his various trunks and took from each certain articles, placing them in one large English traveling trunk.

His next move was to ring the bell and then step into the bath-room.

A servant answered the bell and Mr. Ravenfield called out:

"My man, I am taking a bath, and I've just found out that I have brought off with my luggage, my friend Downing's trunk, so send the porter here at once, and have it sent to the Sturtevant House."

The porter soon came, and a bare arm was extended to him from the bath-room with a five-dollar note in it, and he was told:

"Take that large leather trunk, my man, and leave it at once at the Sturtevant House for Mr. Downing."

"It was brought by mistake with my luggage, so send it at once and do not wait until morning."

The porter, strong as he was, had some trouble in shouldering the trunk; but he did not grumble, with a five-dollar fee in his pocket, and promptly obeyed his orders.

Soon after his departure Mr. Roger Ravenfield wrote a note and left it on the table, after which he left his rooms, locking the door after him, and he passed out of the hotel without any one suspecting him, for if seen, he was supposed to have been visiting some of the guests in the hotel.

Hailing a hack, he drove to the Sturtevant House and asked if a trunk had been left there for Mr. Downing.

"It had," was the reply, and so Mr. Ravenfield got his trunk and drove away, but whither it would puzzle any one to find out.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DISCOVERY.

AS Captain Williams entered his office the following morning he saw that there was some cause of excitement, and his lieutenant said, quickly:

"I was just going to send for you, chief, for Surgeon Spotswood has just returned with a remarkable story."

Captain Williams took his seat leisurely, and Police Surgeon Dillon Spotswood, the handsome young physician of the force, stepped forward and said:

"Another case of drugging, chief, but this time not with chloroform, though the one who administered it is the same."

"Ah! you refer to the so-called English detective?"

"Yes, sir; and you were right, for he was the thief, and now he is worse."

"Well?"

"He has poisoned Detective Lucas."

Not an expression of the chief's face changed, though all knew that he must be shocked at the news, and Surgeon Spotswood continued:

"I was called into the Park Hotel, sir, on my way down, to visit a man who was reported dead."

"It seems that a gentleman had arrived there the day before and engaged a suite of handsome rooms, and soon after another guest had taken a room near."

"They became acquainted at the table, and the last arrival went to the other's rooms for a smoke and was taken ill."

"He sent for a friend by a messenger, and this

friend arrived, and a doctor was called in and administered some medicine.

"Then the gentleman in the suite of rooms ordered up several bottles of wine and some supper, and at a late hour called for the porter to move a trunk belonging to a friend to the Sturtevant House, for it had been brought by mistake, he said, with his baggage.

"Hearing no sound in the rooms this morning at ten, it was reported to the office, and the door broken open of the sick man's rooms.

"He was breathing hard, and I was sent for, as he could not be aroused.

"I found him to be Detective Boland, but of course said nothing, and discovered that there was morphine in the medicine, enough to kill him had he taken all at once.

"In the suite of rooms the stranger was not found, but in the bedroom lay the friend who had been sent for.

"He was dead, and I recognized him as Detective Lucas.

"He had been dead for some hours, I discovered, by an examination, and I found upon the lounge in Boland's room his clothes, arranged into a dummy.

"Champagne glasses were upon the table, and in one were the dregs of opium, showing the cause of death, though I suppose the man meant not to kill him, but, as poor Lucas had heart trouble, it did so.

"I saw on the table a note addressed to you, and here it is, sir.

"I may add that I sent to the captain of the nearest precinct for an officer, whom I left in charge, and as Boland is coming around all right, I came to report to you."

"Surgeon Spotswood, you have done your duty well, and I thank you.

"You are the very man for surgeon of a detective force; but this murderer was Ravenfield, of course?"

"Yes, sir, and he passed out of the hotel, and stopping in at the Sturtevant I heard that a Mr. Downing had called about one o'clock for his trunk, so he is well away."

"Yes, and a clever scamp to catch; but we must do it, Spotswood."

"Yes, sir, the honor of the corps is at stake; but I will now return to Boland."

"Wait until I have read this note, and I will accompany you."

The chief opened the envelope and read:

"DEAR CHIEF:—

"When you sent a man to shadow me, you should have been sure that I had not seen him in your very pleasant quarters.

"But I did see him, as I sat in my cell, so recognized him at a glance, and knew his game when he came to the hotel.

"It told me that though the papers were berating you for a mistake, you knew just what you were about, and I knew that I was to be run down, for, though I had deceived others, you had taken my measure.

"So I made friends with Detective Boland, and, having some knowledge of medicines and their uses, and keeping a supply on hand, I simply brought on an attack of illness for your man.

"But he is a cunning fellow, and sent for a friend to nurse him.

"I had seen Detective Lucas also at your quarters, so had to dose him also.

"We enjoyed a pleasant evening together; but now, as it is growing late and your two men are no longer dangerous, I will take my leave.

"I do not like America; old England for me every time, with the Continent to skip to when affairs get clouded at home.

"So I shall return across the Atlantic, and if you wish my photograph for your Rogues' Gallery you must come there to take me.

"Adieu, my dear chief, and my regards to them at London, should you cable again.

"Yours,

"ROGER RAVENFIELD."

The chief smiled when he had read the letter aloud to Doctor Spotswood and said:

"He is a remarkable man, and equal to an emergency; but let us go to see poor Boland and see if something cannot be done for Lucas."

"Lucas is beyond aid, but Boland will soon be himself again," replied the chief.

And entering a carriage they were driven to the Park Hotel.

There they found the officer waiting in the suite of rooms which Roger Ravenfield had occupied, and the body of the dead detective was lying upon the bed.

The chief ordered a coroner sent for at once, and then sought Detective Boland.

He found him sitting up in an easy-chair, but looking pale and haggard.

The detective smiled faintly and said:

"He was too clever for me, sir."

"No; he drugged you, and you were not proof against that.

"I have a letter from him, and having recognized you, from seeing you at the station, he sought you at once and acted promptly.

"He is a very clever man, Boland, but you were not prepared for such prompt action on his part."

"I thank you, sir, for your kind consideration; but it is terrible about poor Lucas, is it not?"

"Yes; but the man, by taking his life, has put a hangman's rope about his neck."

"I hope so, chief; but is there no clew to his whereabouts?"

"No; we must begin in the dark; but the

dawn must dawn for us some time, and when you are able you can begin work, for I put the matter in your hands; but I will try and get a few pointers for you.

"Rest for a couple of days and then report."

"But he may gain the time to elude us completely, sir."

"No; he is not a man that needs time for his acts, and he has already eluded us.

"His game is played, and we must now play ours."

And the chief returned to his quarters, stopping on the way to find out just what kind of a man "Mr. Downing" was.

The porter gave a description of him, but it did not tally at all with that of Roger Ravenfield, and so the chief was more in a quandary than ever.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE "DELMARS" AT HOME.

IN a suite of handsomely-furnished rooms, in a large apartment house sat a young and beautiful woman at breakfast.

The room was furnished in a luxurious style, well suited to the queenly-looking occupant who was lazily sipping her coffee and reading the morning *Herald*.

Suddenly she started and her face flushed, then paled, as she pushed her chair back from the table and riveted her gaze upon the paper, where some startling announcement had caught her eyes.

What she read was the announcement of the robbery of Mr. Isaac Lindo, and the escape of the alleged thief.

Several times she read the article, and then from between her teeth came the words:

"Fool! he has lost all by not having his eyes about him.

"Why did he not see what was outside of the window?"

"And it is a quarter of a million that he has lost too."

She arose and approached the window, her long morning-robe of softest China *crêpe* trailing after her, and her every movement one of grace.

Very beautiful she was, in face and in form, worthy to be a queen among women as far as beauty went.

But what of her heart, her character?

She was one whom the reader has met before, for she is none other than Di Delmar Seldon, the lovely scheming wife of the fugitive heir.

The home in which she dwells is in New York City, in the fashionable upper part of town on the west side, and about her is every luxury that wealth can purchase.

The suite of eight rooms are large, and furnished throughout with refined taste and elegance.

The service upon the table is of solid silver and cut-glass, and the servant who just then entered with a plate of hot muffins is in livery.

Di Seldon is certainly living in grandeur, and her small, shapely hands sparkle with diamonds, and solitaires of rare beauty are in her ears.

"You can clear the table, Toma," she said to the liveried waiter, and she walked into an adjoining room, her parlor, and it too was lavish in its display of furnishings and *brio-a-brac*.

All through the morning she seemed ill at ease, but after lunch dressed for a drive and won the admiration of all who saw her in her stylish pony phaeton, handling the reins most skillfully over a pair of spirited ponies.

Her dinner was eaten in stately silence, and then she dismissed her servants, and retired to her room, as her maid believed to go to bed under the plea of not feeling well.

But an hour after, in her disguise of a messenger-boy, she slipped out of her room and out of the flat.

Springing upon a down-town car, she made her way to the neighborhood of Madison Square and disappeared in the throng of people always congregated in that popular resort of the great city.

"It was an hour after midnight when the 'messenger-boy' let himself into the flat again with his pass-key.

The third morning after the diamond robbery, Di Seldon is again seated at breakfast at the fashionable hour of ten, when a carriage stops before the apartment-house and a gentleman springs out.

"It is my husband, Toma, so go down and get his trunk and I will let him in."

Toma had never seen his master.

All he knew was that he was employed with others by the beautiful lady, "Mrs. Delmar," who had furnished the flat and said that her husband was in Europe, but would return soon.

He had come at last, so Toma was to have a master, a circumstance which was a cause of regret to him.

He met "Mr. Delmar" at the elevator door, and that gentleman at once entered his wife's elegant home.

"Ah! how well you are made up; who would have recognized you, dear?"

"But welcome home."

Sue held her lips for a kiss and received it.

Such was the meeting of the two, Rudolph

Seldon and his young wife, after nearly three months' separation.

Had the love between the two utterly faded away?

Had she ceased to love the man who had won her heart that day of the duel near her country house?

Had he ceased to love the beautiful girl who had nursed him so tenderly when he was wounded and a guest in Glen Cottage; he who had tried to bind her to him by a mock marriage?

It would seem so from their greeting.

Yet in his disguise she had known him the moment she had seen him alight from the carriage.

Toma now carried the trunk, with the aid of the elevator boy, into the master's room, and was told to get some breakfast for Mr. Delmar.

"You have read the papers?" suggested, rather than asked the husband, when he had thrown himself into an easy-chair, after laying aside his duster and hat.

"Of your failure I read; but not to-day's, for I had just come in to breakfast, Ru."

"Then there is news for you, I guess, and I have not seen to-day's either.

"Let me see them."

She handed over a paper and he unfolded and glanced at it.

Then a cruel oath broke from between his teeth, and livid as a dead man, he sprung to his feet.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FOR LOVE OF GOLD.

"WHAT so shocks you, Rudolph, for you are as pale as death?"

The words were spoken with the utmost calmness, and the beautiful woman showed no atom of excitement at the sudden seeming terror of her husband.

Her words calmed him in an instant, and with a rapid turn to the window and back he threw himself into a chair, and said, with an air of perfect nonchalance:

"Oh, it was merely a passing emotion at what I saw in this paper."

"If it is interesting, read it to me."

"Wait," and the voice dropped into warning as Toma appeared with breakfast.

It was a meal to tempt a monk, and the man ate with evident relish, the woman in a lazy, dreamy way.

She talked pleasantly during the time, asked her husband about his travels, and then, as the meal was finished, found an excuse to send Toma down-town to the bank, and her maid to the milliner's and dressmaker's.

As the cook had no reason to leave her culinary department, she seemed not to dread her eavesdropping.

"Now, Ru, what is it?" she asked, as she entered the pleasant parlor and sitting-room combined, where Rudolph Seldon was quietly smoking a cigar.

"I wish it was well, Di, but it is not, for I did not get the jewels after all."

"I wish to know all, Ru."

She seemed to control him, to influence him against his will almost, for he said, with a hard laugh:

"If you must know, that settles it, but it is not pleasant to review one's mistakes."

"We have made but few, Rudolph, for since you have followed my lead things have generally gone well."

"You had a little money, and I a home also, when we started life anew in New York."

"Outwardly a gentleman, and one of wealth, you have secretly been a crook, and you have made it pay, while I have lived in luxury."

"When I discovered that this man Lindo was to go to London and Paris to purchase a hundred thousand dollars, I thought it just the chance for you, and so it was."

"The letters of introduction you forged made him your friend, and all seems to have gone well until you got back to New York and had the diamonds in your very grasp."

"Then, I suppose, you became reckless, thinking you had won your game, and got into trouble."

She spoke in the easy, lazy manner natural to her, and he replied:

"I should think I did get into trouble, and I got into more to get out of it."

"That was a bold scheme of yours to charge your captor with the robbery."

"It was like your bold way of working, Ru."

He seemed pleased at the flattery, and with a light laugh said:

"Do you know, I really enjoyed the whole trip abroad, and in spite of its danger?"

"I got into Lindo's good fellowship with my forged letters, and we had pleasant hours together, for he is a splendid fellow and rare good company."

"He introduced me into some of the clubs and I won large sums with my doctored cards, and chance helped me one night in the hotel by going next door to see what was the matter with a poor fellow who was groaning terribly."

"He was unconscious, and had left a confession upon the table, addressed to the London Secret Service chief."

"I found that he had taken poison and was dying, and glancing at the confession I determined to make use of it."

"So I pocketed it, along with a few other things of his, and left him to his fate."

"The next morning he was found dead in his room and not a line to identify him, so he was set down as a suicide and buried at the expense of the hotel proprietor."

"His name was Roger Ravenfield, and he had been a detective, but was led into temptation, fell and went to the bad after he had accepted a bribe from the man whose footsteps he was dogging."

"Well, I took his badge, destroyed his papers, pocketed his money, and assuming his name so wrote my letters of introduction to Ike Lindo, and I passed muster as the real article."

"I had all that I had worked for in my very grasp, when I was faced by this mysterious fellow who arrested me and ran me around to the chief of the Secret Service in this city."

"I then saw that he did not know Williams, so played my game as the man of honor who had arrested a thief."

"It did not take then, but I played it upon Lindo the next day, and he vouched for me and I was set free."

"I saw, however, that the chief still suspected me, in spite of the mysterious leaving of the strange man who arrested me, and so I decided to lose no time in escaping."

"I dared not communicate with you, for fear I was shadowed, so I declined Lindo's kind invitation to accompany him home, and went to a hotel up-town here."

"And, let me say just here, I will protect, rather than rob, that good fellow, Lindo, again."

"Ah! you are getting good."

"No, only I am grateful to him for helping me out, though he did really believe in me."

"Well, I had not been any time in my new quarters before I found a detective was shadowing me."

"I paid for my suite of rooms two weeks in advance, just to make it appear that I had come to stay, and then I set to work to get rid of my man."

"This I did," and he went on to tell all that he had done at the hotel, and then continued:

"I then went to the Sturtevant House, got my trunk, and saw that the porter did not recognize me as Mr. Ravenfield."

"I then drove to the ferry, paid off my driver, waited awhile, and then called another hack which drove me with my trunk to the uptown depot, where I took the train to a station out of town, and from thence got a boat to bring me back here."

"You are a shrewd one, Ru; but you should be, as you are a marked man."

"Oh, yes; and I am more so than you think, for I'll read you now what so startled me awhile ago."

And he took up the paper and settled himself back in his chair like one who had something pleasant to read about, rather than that which would bring terror to his soul.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CHIEF WILLIAMS'S TRIUMPH.

CURIOUS as she was to know what had so startled her husband, Di showed no sign of it.

She was schooling herself to command her nerves perfectly and every expression of her face.

Had she remained in the country, at her little home, and married some honest farmer, the evil of her nature might have slumbered on without awakening through life.

She never would have been happy, yet she would not have been unhappy.

But, instead, she had loved Rudolph Seldon at sight, and the scene of the duel she had witnessed had made a lasting impression upon her.

Had she found her ideal to be a man of noble nature, then she too would have been a noble woman and a devoted wife.

But he had gone to her little home with a lie upon his lips, had told a falsehood about his wound, and though he still was her idol, he was a fallen one, and her nature suffered by the contact.

Then he had attempted to deceive her by a mock marriage, and again had sought to desert her.

So it was that his deeds brought out the sleeping devil in her nature, and Di Delmar, the beautiful country girl, became a merciless fiend.

Whether it was love or hate she still felt for Rudolph she did not know, and she cared not to analyze her feelings.

She had the ambition of Lucifer, and she was determined to possess riches untold, and he was to be the means of her getting them.

She had told him her plans, and, a fugitive heir, a man who was branded, hunted and an outcast, he had readily fallen in with her daring plots, and had thus far reaped a good harvest of gold.

She lived in the luxury of a millionaire, and he sought to gain the means for her to do so, at the same time catering to his own luxurious

tastes to the utmost, and laying aside gold for his future use.

He was an adept at disguises, a perfect actor, and in greatest danger, as has been seen, he showed the greatest nerve.

As Rudolph Delmar he was playing the French noble, who had married an American girl, and he spoke with an accent *Française* which he never for an instant forgot, while all of his movements and expressions were in perfect imitation of a Frenchman.

Speaking the language perfectly as he did, he could readily pass for an educated Frenchman, and where he seemed to be very rich no one cared to see his papers for his title.

And under her French maid, who had received a convent education in Paris, Di was daily studying for the fortune, for her dream was to go abroad some day and be a queen among women, for her ambition was boundless, and she knew her wondrous beauty well, and she knew her great power over men even better.

For the future she did not take Rudolph Seldon into consideration, but for the present he should make her fortune.

And he recognized her power, and felt that she was the ruling spirit.

He might rule others, but she was his ruler, and he was willing that it should be so.

So stood the two toward each other, that morning in the elegant flat up-town.

"I am ready to hear what you have to read, Ru," said Di, as she threw herself lazily into an easy-chair.

He threw aside his cigar and, after an instant, he began to read in a clear voice that had not a tremor in it, and she smiled approvingly at his nerve.

What he read was as follows:

"RIGHT, AFTER ALL!

"THE SECRET SERVICE CHIEF WRONGED!

"CAPTAIN WILLIAMS'S LEVEL HEAD!

"A Murderer as well as a Thief!"

"We desire to retract our words against our gallant Secret Service chief, that he was always groping in the dark, rather than bring the lantern of common sense to light his way."

"He has shown us that he was right and we wrong, or rather the prisoner has shown us."

"We, with others, criticized him for the sad mistake which we believed he had made in arresting an English gentleman, the friend of Mr. Ike Lindo, the diamond merchant, for having been the robber, instead of the real thief."

"The chief said he was right, and Mr. Lindo's goodness of heart alone saved the real thief, and that, whatever the flight of the other party, it did not prove his guilt of the diamond theft."

"After being released from jail, Mr. Lindo's friend, refusing his hospitality, sought rooms in an uptown hotel."

"He secured an elegant suite of rooms, paying two weeks in advance for them, and his luggage was taken there."

"But Chief Williams had not yielded his opinion as to the guilt of the man, and so he sent one of his best men to shadow him."

"This man, Detective Boland, arrived at the hotel with a trunk, and, after changing his room several times, got one to suit him."

"It was next the suite of Mr. Roger Ravenfield."

"And, by a strange coincidence, his seat at table was by Mr. Ravenfield, and the detective ordering wine begged his companion to help him drink it."

"What followed was from the fact that Ravenfield had seen the detective at Headquarters, so knew his game, and as he seems to understand medicine and carries a pocket-case with him, he slipped into Mr. Boland's after-dinner coffee, a dose that made him very ill."

"Mr. Boland sent for a friend—that is, another detective—to finish the work of watching, and Ravenfield recognized him also, so began on him."

"The result was that Boland was cased with morphine and went to sleep, and Detective Lucas, who had a failing for drink, was treated to wine, and in it opium, which soon placed him *hors de combat*."

"Having gotten rid of his shadowers, Mr. Ravenfield quietly packed what he needed into one trunk, rung for the porter, and said that that piece of baggage belonged to his friend Downing at the Sturtevant, and sent it there."

"Then he robbed his victims, and, driving to the Sturtevant, evidently disguised or sending some one else, got his trunk and was driven to the Pennsylvania Ferry so he has evidently left the city, for there all trace of him ends."

"But the sequel is a sad one, for poor Lucas died from the effects of the drug, thus making Ravenfield his murderer."

"Detective Boland, however, is all right and ready to go on the hunt for his man."

"The murderer had the audacity to write a letter to Chief Williams, and the latter has a cablegram from the London Secret Service chief proving that this man is not the Roger Ravenfield he professed to be."

"Mr. Lindo is considerably nonplused at the affair, and offers a reward of twenty-five thousand dollars for the capture of his late pretended friend."

"We give below a copy of the man's letter to Captain Williams, and hope to have more particulars to place before our readers to-morrow."

"So you murdered the man Lucas?" said Di.

"Yes, it seems so, but it was an accident, owing to his having heart disease."

"Well, bury him with the rest of the past, and listen to a plot I have for the future, dear," and Di drew nearer to her husband, as though for fear the walls had ears to hear what she had to say.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DI'S PLOT.

WHEN Rudolph Seldon had finished reading the article on the death of Detective Lucas, he showed no emotion whatever.

He well understood that whatever his crimes in the past might be, he had certainly placed the noose about his neck by taking the life of the detective, whether he had intended doing so or not.

"You have gotten yourself into a serious scrape, Ru," said Di, thoughtfully.

"You mean that this man Ravenfield has?"

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten, my dear Baron Rudolph; it was Ravenfield who did it; but do you think there is a chance of his being run down?"

"I think not; but one must be careful to escape the hounds of the law in this city, for that man Williams is not one to deceive, and Boland will be more than ever anxious to catch his man now."

"As one died, I wish it had been Boland, for Lucas was given to drink, and so was not dangerous to one who knew his failing."

"And you feel safe?"

"Oh yes, quite so; but you had a plan to propose, I believe?"

"Yes."

"I am all attention, my sweet wife."

"Well, I see no reason why you should run such risks by *personally* doing your work."

"Ah! do you intend to do it, *ma belle*?"

"No, but others can."

"Who, for instance?"

"Well, my idea is for you to form a League of Secret Crooks."

"Ah!"

"I have not been idle since your departure for Europe, and as messenger boy, waitress in various gardens, beggar and other disguises, I have picked up some very valuable information."

"Di, you are a wonder."

"Thank you; but I do not know whether to sell my knowledge or make it pay better by using the people."

"Now, I can place my hands upon a dozen crooks upon whose heads a price is set, and they are of both sexes."

"I think, therefore, it would be best to use them."

"As how?"

"Well, say we break up here and dismiss our servants, and while I go to other quarters in Brooklyn, you can arrive in New York from South America, if so you will."

"You can get for yourself bachelor quarters, furnish them with elegance and hang out your sign as *Doctor Delmar*."

"You have studied medicine, intending to be a physician, you have told me, so can attend to cases that may come in accidentally to be doctored."

"If you kill them, then you will be only doing what scores of other ignorant doctors are doing daily, only it is not called by so harsh a term as murder."

"You can have your workers then come to your office, and do all your work from there."

"I do not exactly get your full meaning, Di."

"I am trying to be explicit, and wish to say you had best organize a score of crooks into a league to rob."

"Get the best of men for the work, a few skilled burglars, diamond-thieves, confidence-men, and women, too, and have them put under vows that will hold them together."

"Put them on salary, with a percentage of a fourth on their work, another fourth to go to the general fund of the league, and the half for yourself."

"These going in and out of a doctor's office will attract no attention, and you can thus have a score of employes who should increase your earnings by thousands."

"You can join several clubs and so win money with cards, and a couple of years ought to make us millionaires, you see."

"I do see, and I do say, Di, that you are a beautiful, scheming devil."

"But your plot is a good one, and I will follow it."

"But you?"

"Will live apart from you, quietly enjoying life, for I can wait until our fortune is made."

"As an invalid, I can send for *Doctor Delmar*, of course, when I need you on business matters, but I have more sense than to send for you should I be really ill."

"Life is so short, you know, so wretchedly short, my dear husband, and I desire to live my allotted span."

"I believe you think I would poison you, Di, that I wish to get rid of you."

"So many do destroy the bridge on which they have crossed the stream to safety, Ru, I confess I have felt you might do the same."

"You wrong me, for I depend upon you for my success."

"Until you reach success, yes; but then?"

"Still we will not discuss too far into the future, but work smoothly for the present."

"I wish to see you a millionaire, and as soon as possible, and I live in hopes that you may yet claim your inheritance, for that case I will

make my especial care and discover if you are suspected or not, and the lawyers only lie *perdu* until your return, to arrest you.

"There is a fortune, a vast one, ahead of us, Rudolph, and we must grasp it.

"Now both Toma and Marinette are anxious to return to France, and they are in love with each other, they say.

"So we can be liberal toward them and let them go, so as to be rid of them.

"The cook, I must tell you, is to be married soon and go West, so we will have no one about us to say we were once Baron Rudolph and wife, and can thus start life anew, I in the quietude of a Brooklyn home, or one upon Washington Heights, which I believe I would prefer, and you as Doctor Delmar in the lower part of the city.

"Grow your mustache and an imperial, twist up the ends, and wax them a *la* Napoleon, wear eye-glasses, gold-rimmed, and a wig of white hair, pretend you are bald, if asked about it, and my word for it no one will recognize you as Rudolph Seldon, Roger Ravenfield or Baron Rudolph Delmar.

"Keep up your beautiful French accent, of course, and dress like a gentleman of the old school, and you can defy detection and detectives.

"Make your people fear you, and serve you well, and my word for it you will coin gold through them.

"What jewelry and small valuables you may get hold of, I can dispose of for you, and will take from them a souvenir for myself, of course.

"Play your game boldly, and let none of your people know you as you are, or possess your confidence.

"School that remarkably handsome face of yours to show no surprise or emotion.

"Make a mask of it, so that your face can never betray you.

"Keep your hot blood toned down, so that it will not pale, or flush your face when occasions for alarm and surprise come.

"Be careful not to kill, unless you have to do so, and so train your people, for murders are so awkward to get rid of.

"Life goes out easily, but the casket is not readily destroyed, and conscience often makes a fool of a man, yes and women, too.

"Now, my dear husband, what think you of my plot?" and she smiled as sweetly in his face as though her red lips had uttered words that would lead him into a path of honor.

"It is grand!" he said, excitedly, when she checked him with:

"There, there, don't get excited, but keep cool."

He obeyed at once, and said with an air of ennui:

"I like it immensely, Di.

"And will adopt it?"

"Oh, yes."

"When?"

"At once."

"Doctor Delmar, our fortune is made," she cried, with earnestness.

"There, there, my dear, don't get excited; it is bad for the nerves and don't pay," he said, wearily, and she broke forth in ringing laughter at his return shot at her.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. LINDO'S VISITOR.

As the papers had stated, Mr. Isaac Lindo was considerably annoyed at the affair which had brought him into such publicity.

Then, too, he felt the deepest sympathy for the family of the unfortunate Lucas, and feeling that he was an indirect cause of their loss, he sent them, in an unostentatious way, a thousand dollars as a balm to their grief.

As Lucas had been in the habit of getting upon sprees, and thus spending the savings of months, and forcing his wife to keep a little store as a means of regular support, while he was at home so seldom that he was almost a stranger to his children, this thousand dollars came in like the Balm of Gilead and quickly healed the widow's sorrows.

The affair of the diamond robbery, and death following, with the death of Lucas, proved a nine days' wonder for the people of New York, and the papers dropped it as a stale sensation and looked up fresh news.

But Mr. Lindo felt himself still an object of curiosity and interest, and stayed within his handsome bachelor quarters as much as possible to avoid being seen.

He was enjoying his after-dinner *café noir* and a fragrant cigar, one evening, some weeks after the escape of Ravenfield, when a servant said that a gentleman wished to see him.

"Who is it, Saloam?" he asked the servant-girl.

"I never saw him before, sir."

"Ask for his card, or name."

The girl soon returned with a card, upon which had been hastily scribbled with a lead-pencil:

"D. DEWHURST."

The name had a somewhat startling effect upon the handsome diamond merchant, for he sprang to his feet and said quickly:

"Show him in, Saloam, at once, and I am out to all other callers."

A moment after Mr. Lindo was face to face with the mysterious man who had saved his life and his gems.

He saw before him a man of imposing appearance.

Tall, elegantly formed, yet athletic, with massive shoulders, slender waist and well-turned limbs.

His head and carriage were erect as one who had had military training, and his dress was fashionable, yet plain.

The face of the man impressed Mr. Lindo most.

It was pale, with sad-looking eyes, and a beard that concealed the lower features; but a very handsome face it certainly was, and his smile lighted up his countenance as a ray of sunshine does a dark cloud.

"Mr. Lindo, I am Mr. Dewhurst," he said in a low, rich-toned voice.

"And happy am I to meet you, sir, for I owe to you my fortune, my life," and the merchant grasped the hand of his visitor, while he spoke in a tone that showed he meant all that he said.

"Not so much as that, sir, for the doctor would have brought you around all right, and your fortune was not all in the leather case, I take it," said the stranger, as though anxious to put his services at their proper value.

"You are wrong, sir, for the surgeon distinctly said that if I had not been brought back to consciousness just when I was, I would have died, while in the case was my fortune, as its value was over a quarter of a million, with gems I had of others."

"I am glad, sir, that I was so fortunate then to serve you."

"And glad am I to have you come and make yourself known to me, Mr. Dewhurst, for I felt hurt that you had hidden from me."

"And let me here say that I humbly beg pardon for having wronged you as I did, by accepting the belief that that infamous man was the wronged one, and thus giving him a chance of escape."

"You must remember that I did not see you, and I found it hard to doubt one I believed my friend."

"But the chief, Captain Williams, believed you, from your face, he said, and doubted the other, and your mysterious disappearance added to the belief of your guilt and Ravenfield's innocence."

"And he has added murder to his other crimes?"

"Yes; but you forgive me, sir, do you not?"

"Assuredly, sir, for I have only myself to blame, as my flight made me appear guilty in the face of all the circumstances."

"But why did you go away, Mr. Dewhurst?"

The visitor did not at once reply, and Mr. Lindo said quickly:

"Pardon me, for I meant not to offend."

"Nor do you, sir; but I hesitated about how to answer you, and I will now do so."

"I came here to see you to-night to ask a favor of you, and—"

"It is granted, sir."

"Hear me first, and then decide."

"You asked me why I left so mysteriously, and I desire to confess to you that I am at present under a cloud, a man who cannot face with honor his fellow-men until a stain on that honor is removed."

"I am, Lindo, placing my confidence in your keeping, sir."

"It shall be held sacred, sir; but let me say here that Chief Williams said that you had a motive for wishing to remain unknown."

"He is a wonderful reader of mankind, sir; but to my story."

"I am here in New York for the purpose of finding one who is guilty of a crime for which I now bear the ignominy."

"I am a self-constituted detective, and I have been on a trail which I shall dog to the end, if it leads to the gallows."

"But I am poor, sir, or, that is, being an outcast, I cannot place my hands upon certain property I own, and so must remain poor."

"I saw your offer of reward, your willingness to pay me a large sum for the service rendered you, and I come to you for aid."

"And not in vain, sir, for I will give you my check for—"

"No, I do not intend to accept pay, I do not wish a reward, but I do ask you to cash my note for one year, with promise of renewal to two years, if I cannot pay it when due, for the sum of fifteen thousand dollars."

"Gladly, sir, and—"

"I know what you would say, sir, that you wish me to accept the money; but that I will not do, and I show my faith in you by coming to you as I do."

"I ask it as a loan, on my note, and the money I shall devote to secret service work, to clear my own name, and to hunt down that man, Ravenfield."

"Will you help me in this, sir, upon my terms alone?"

"With all my heart, Mr. Dewhurst."

"Remember, I am to be a secret detective, known as I am to no one except yourself, and

perhaps, if necessary, to Captain Williams, and I am to work in a good cause.

"I have carefully considered expenses, salaries and bribes, and I feel that fifteen thousand dollars will place me upon a firm footing, with a thousand which I have of my own, and I wish you to remain my banker, drawing for the money as I need it."

"I am wholly at your service in the matter, Mr. Dewhurst, and you can rest assured that I will aid you in every way in my power."

"Now let us have a glass of wine together and drink to your perfect success in your Secret Service work."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DETECTIVE DEWHURST AT HOME.

A MAN sat in a pleasant room of a flat, small, yet comfortable, gazing into the fire that blazed brightly in the grate.

There was an appearance about the room of bachelor quarters, for the touches which feminine fingers alone can add to a homewere wanting.

Still it was a cozy place withal, and the occupant looked very comfortable as he sat there in deep reverie.

He had lighted a lamp, for it was evening, yet used it not to read by, and though a book-case well filled stood in one corner of the room, he seemed not to care to make use of it.

The man was dressed in a checked suit, had a bushy head of hair and beard, and his nose unmistakably betrayed his Jewish origin.

A pair of spectacles concealed his eyes, and altogether he was not a very prepossessing individual.

A knock at the door caused him to go and open it, and he said with a pronounced accent:

"Vell, v'at vas your wants, young mans?"

"To see Mr. Dare Dewhurst, sir, if this is where he lives?" was the polite response of the visitor.

"He vas lives here, so coom in."

In stepped none other than Harvey Howard, tall, erect, his hair long and falling upon his shoulders, and the ends of his silken mustache turned upward in a very rakish manner.

He was dressed in the free-and-easy costume of the gentleman from the Gulf States, and wore a slouch hat with a broad brim.

Handsome he certainly was, and with his *negligé* dress and polite, courtly manner, one to attract attention anywhere.

He removed his hat as he stepped into the room, and the Jew said:

"Vell, young mans, who vas you, v'at vas you, and v'at you wants, for I vas Mister Dewhurst."

A cheery laugh broke from the lips of the young man as he said:

"You may be *Two Hearses*, but you are not the man I seek, Dare Dewhurst—I have made a mistake, so pardon me, please."

"You have made no mistake, my friend, and I bid you welcome," came in the deep, rich voice of Octave Archer.

"What! you the one I seek?"

"Why, I would have sworn you were a Jew peddler."

"So much for my disguise, and I feel I am getting quite an adept at the art of metamorphosing myself, Harvey; but how glad I am to see you, and how did you leave all at home?" and throwing aside the bushy wig and beard, Octave Archer, whom the reader now knows as Dare Dewhurst, placed a chair for his friend.

"All well, thanks, and my mother was most glad to have me come on the errand you wrote me about, and I came as a Texan, for it is a better disguise, I think, so different from my old-time style of dress, and I wore my hair short then, no mustache, and dressed prim as a deacon, you remember."

"Yes; though expecting you, I would hardly have known you, and I have come now to look into every face I meet to read it."

"You must remain as you are, and if disguises are needed, then you can assume them."

"You know best; but how goes all with you?"

"I have stood a test of the detectives, so feel safe, and I have gained clues which I hope will pan out well for both of us."

"I am glad to hear this; but have you ever heard of Barney, that doubt-ledyed traitor?"

"Oh, yes; he ran through with the money at a gaming-table, and if I mistake not is now herding with a crowd of crooks known to the police as the Ghouls of Gotham and the Vampires of the Metropolis."

"I expected he would come to a bad end, Mr. Archer—"

"Dewhurst; Dare Dewhurst is my name now, Harvey, for I have taken two that belonged to my ancestors."

"I'll not make the mistake again; but did you learn that two of those counterfeiters escaped from jail, for it caught on fire?"

"Yes; and they have come to New York, for I recognized one of them the other day and dogged him to his lodgings, and the other must be here too."

"That is what I meant by the clew to clear yourself, for once we get them into our power we can force them to terms."

"You have then determined to turn detective?"

"I have been a detective, self-constituted, I admit, ever since you saved me from Barney's plot to hang me, after having his money for setting me free."

"I accepted my release in my own mind only by vowing to myself that I would clear my name of the infamy upon it."

"I admit all looks black against me, and I do not blame people for believing me guilty, but, as surely as I believe in your innocence, so surely am I not the robber and murderer I am called."

"Now you know what my work is, my duty is, and I wish your aid, for I know I can depend upon you, and there is one other whom I hope to have aid us."

"Heart and hand, sir, to the end, and I am rejoiced to be with you in the good work."

"But who is this other person you refer to, may I ask?"

"I can only tell you that two years ago, when in the West among the mining camps, I took the part of a stranger whom several desperadoes intended to kill, having him at a disadvantage."

"I saved his life, and helped him out of the camps, after dressing a wound he had received, and some months after received a letter from General Dave Cook, Chief of the Rocky Mountain Detectives, thanking me for saving one of his men, and sending me a gold badge which made me a member of his Secret Service League."

"This badge is all the authority I now have for my detective work here; but to tell you who this third person is, I will say that he is the man I then served, and yesterday I was startled to hear my name called, and, turning quickly, I saw the Rocky Mountain Detective."

"He had recognized me, for I was not in disguise, and told me he was also on detective service in New York and wished to see me on important business, and had, in fact, been in search of me, so I gave him my name of Dewhurst and address, and told him to call this evening."

As Dare Dewhurst spoke there came a knock upon the door, and opening it the Rocky Mountain Detective stepped across the threshold.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE ONE-ARMED DETECTIVE.

THE one who entered the home of Detective Dewhurst, as I must now call Octave Archer in his character as a man-hunter of the metropolis, the reader has met before, but under circumstances that would be excusable in him for not expecting to again see him.

The last time the reader saw the individual was in a feminine dress of deep black, and heavily veiled, when he called upon Lawyer Ernest Wilber at Seldon Hall.

The time before that was when he went down with the car into the river below, when he held Rudolph Seldon as his prisoner.

In a word, the visitor to Detective Dewhurst was none other than Dick Dana, a faithful and trusted member of Dave Cook's Rocky Mountain Secret Service men.

"Ah, Mr. Dana, I was just speaking of you to my particular friend, Mr. Harvey Howard, to whom allow me to present you," and Dare Dewhurst warmly grasped the hand of his visitor.

His face was bearded now, his hair worn a trifle long, and there was an expression of sternness upon his lips which had taken the place of the smile that was wont to rest there.

His left hand appeared at a glance to be thrust into his coat between the buttons, but a second look would reveal that the sleeve from the elbow was empty.

He had lost an arm.

He bowed in a dignified way to Harvey Howard and said quietly:

"I have met Mr. Harvey Howard before, but he fails to recall me."

"Ah! and when and where may I ask?" and the young man's heart seemed to come up into his throat and choke him.

"I was the man who ran down Con Carter's Counterfeiters and arrested them, you among the number, Mr. Howard Burns."

Hardly had the words left his lips when a revolver-muzzle was in his face and low and stern came the words:

"I saved your life once, Detective Dana, but by Heaven, I will take it unless you swear not to betray my friend here!"

Dick Dana seemed not in the slightest degree disturbed at the threat, nor did he flinch from the cocked revolver looking him squarely in the face, but said with an air of the utmost sangfroid:

"Come, Dewhurst, sit down and let us have a talk together, for if I had any desire to win the reward offered for the recapture of one Howard Burns, I could treble it by delivering up the man accused of murdering and robbing Cashier Clark in D—."

"I am not a man to take blood-money by treachery to my friends, and so tell you that Mr. Burns is as safe from arrest by me as you are."

"I believe you, Dana, and will trust you; but let me tell you now that my young friend here is no more guilty of having intentionally counterfeited than am I of killing Cashier Clark."

Howard Harvey had taken the situation calmly, in spite of its danger to himself, and he had not flinched one atom.

His eyes brightened dangerously, when accused, and his hand touched a revolver-butt in his breast-pocket, but he left it to Detective Dewhurst to act and talk.

"Suppose I say that neither of you are guilty of the crimes you are charged with?" and Detective Dana threw himself into a chair with the air of a man who had an important secret to communicate.

"You know neither of us are guilty?" said Dewhurst in a low, suppressed tone that showed how deeply he was moved by the words.

"Yes, I said I knew it, and I'll tell you why, if you care to hear."

"Care to hear? My God! man, are we not branded with infamy and fugitives from justice for crimes we are innocent of?" cried Dare Dewhurst.

"Yes, you escaped from prison by bribing Barney, the keeper, and I am on his trail, too, and I will keep hands off until I can know more of his antecedents."

"But to explain to Mr. Burns first."

"He is known as Howard now, Dana."

"True, until he wipes the tarnish off of his own name."

"I will remember it, Harvey Howard; but to tell the truth, I was a member of Con Carter's counterfeiters' band."

"You?"

"Oh, yes, I joined them to run them down, and I did so, as you know they were caught."

"I was not with the headquarters party, but another, and yet I knew every man in the band, by name and aliases, if not by sight."

"I knew that there was a young engraver, most skilled in his work, doing work for Con Carter, believing him to be a Government officer, and that the men were so pleased with him and what he could do, they determined to make him one of the band."

"Finding that I had to act promptly, as the country was to be flooded with half a million dollars of the best counterfeit bills ever executed, I sprung my trap and made the arrest, and you, Mr. Howard, were caught with the gang, but I supposed would have no trouble proving your innocence."

"I was called at once away to shadow a man who meant big mischief, and I actually forgot your existence, Mr. Howard, in what followed."

"I shadowed my man and found him on the track of a very large sum, which he was determined to get."

"He had no confederates, and was bold enough to play the game alone."

"I had never seen him before, only had an anonymous letter telling me to shadow a gentleman who meant mischief."

"I happened to turn the page over and found a note faintly written in pencil on the other side."

"It was overlooked by the writer of the letter to me, and yet was addressed to him, being a note from a girl."

"This showed me that the writer who put me on the gentleman's track was Ned Norcross, a noted gambler, whom you have doubtless heard of."

"The letter described my man, gave his name and said he was desperate from losses at cards, had been watching a certain cashier of D—, who was making large collections through the country."

"I found my man and shadowed him, and soon discovered that he was shadowing some one."

"It did not take me long to find out who was his man, and as the train stopped at a station I saw you enter, Dewhurst, and, recognized by the gentleman, take a seat by him."

"I did not make myself known to you, but kept watch on my man, and so lost you and the cashier at the depot."

"But my man knew the ropes, it seemed, for he cut around to a spot where there had been some vacant lots which he had hoped to cross."

"But they were being built on, and he changed his course and started around the block when I came up, singing and pretending to be drunk."

"I grasped his arm and asked him to have a drink from my flask, but he cursed me and shook me off rudely, while he ran off."

"I followed as fast as I dared, saw him dart into an alley, and I lost sight of him."

"I saw a light flash out at that minute from a window above, and observing a fire-escape on the house across the alley I ascended it to a height of twelve feet and, turning, saw two men in a bank."

"One man was yourself, Mr. Dewhurst, the other the one whom you had met on the train, and whom my man was shadowing."

"I saw your friend open the door of the vault after throwing something on the table before you, and then I heard a shot."

"You sprung to your feet, while your friend, who stood just within the vault, grasped at it to keep from falling and drew it to."

"I then heard voices in front, and descended from the fire-escape to see who had fired that shot, for it had come from the door which the cashier had not locked as he passed in."

"A man darted by me, and I gave chase down the dark alley."

"He ran to the depot and sprung upon a train just pulling out, and I caught on to the last car."

"I was breathless from my run, so sat down to rest for fully twenty minutes, and then went through the train in search of my man."

"He was not there!"

"I searched the car, going through with the conductor, to whom I made myself known, and looking into the face of every man and woman."

"But he had given me the slip, doubtless by passing across the platform and springing off on the other side, thus remaining in D—."

"The train was a Through Express, and so I went on, determined to look my man up elsewhere, for, knowing his name from that anonymous letter, I could find him."

"I was not known in the affair in D—, so said nothing by telegraph or letter, for I wanted to take my man in myself."

"Well, I found out where he lived and went to his home, to find he had arrived but a short while before me, called there by the death of his father."

"So I set to work to find out all I could about him, and then decided to arrest him, even though his father lay dead in the house."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DETECTIVE'S STORY.

DARE DEWHURST had listened to the story of the One-armed Detective with an interest that was all-absorbing.

His face had not shown what emotions were in heart and brain, but his interest was intense.

He knew that there was one person at least who was aware that he was not the murderer of Cashier Clark on that fearful night in the Bank of D—.

He realized that one other had seen him at the table, counting the money packages over by request of the cashier, when the fatal shot was fired.

Those who had arrested him were two officers who had been in the building, heard the shot, saw through the glass door the cashier stagger back into the vault, and then beheld Archer seize the money, pocket it hastily and leave the building.

They arrested him as he came out, and it was natural that his story was not believed that some one else had fired the shot and he had simply intended going to the police station to give the alarm, and took the money as a precaution, not wishing to leave it there for a crowd to come in, and perhaps some be missing.

By a strange coincidence one barrel of his revolver was empty, and his story that he had fired it from the rear platform of the car that afternoon at a deer was not believed.

Then, too, the bullet was of forty-four caliber, the same as the one taken from the body of Cashier Clark.

With such damning proofs against him, even the prisoner had not wondered that he was believed surely guilty, for against all he had only his word, and his former good character.

Now here was a man who knew him to be guiltless, and it was not to be wondered at that every word he uttered was listened to with rapt attention.

Then, too, this same man would clear by his testimony the alleged counterfeiter.

He had joined Con Carter's band to run them down, and had succeeded.

He knew them all by name, had a roster of them, but the name of Howard Burns was not among them, while further he was aware that Con Carter intended to force the young engraver to join their band, and more, had deceived him to do the work with the belief that he was a Government official.

So it was that this one-armed detective, who a moment before was so feared that a muzzle of a revolver was thrust into his face to cower him, was to be the man to help those who had looked upon him as their foe.

The situation then was truly interesting, and every word uttered by Dick Dana was listened to in a silence that was painful.

"And did you arrest him?" asked Dare Dewhurst, when Detective Dana paused in his story.

"Yes, I went up to his room and soon told him who I was."

"I showed him that I had dogged him from the day I met him on the train, and though I did not let him know that Gambler Norcross was the informer, I led him to believe that I knew all of his actions."

"Still, in my mind there was a doubt that he was really my man."

"I had not seen him fire the shot that killed Cashier Clark, and when I found him at home somehow his appearance had greatly changed and he hardly seemed like the man I had shadowed to the bank."

"But still I felt pretty sure and arrested him;

but he said he could prove an *alibi* and I gave him the chance.

"I had to trust him to a certain extent, so as he was to inherit a large fortune I felt sure of him and pretending to be his friend remained with him until after the funeral.

"Then we started together for the home of the people who he said would prove he was visiting their home the night of the cashier's murder.

"They were people beyond reproach, and I confess their testimony in his favor would have staggered me, had I not seen open on the gentleman's desk, a letter urging him to do just what he did do, and his wife, also, declare that he was their guest.

"This letter he had written after my arresting him and sent it by special messenger, saying he would explain afterward.

"I saw enough to convince me of his guilt, so put the irons on him after we left, and went to a hotel to wait until the early train.

"He begged so to be free of his irons, I yielded, and, pretending to be asleep in my chair, I saw him in a mirror, slip out of bed and come toward me.

"I knew I had a dangerous customer to handle, and who would kill me to escape, and so I ironed his wrist to mine.

"Well, we were on our way to D— by night, I thinking of the surprise I would give in bringing the real murderer and robber, when our train dashed through a bridge into a swollen stream, for it was storming at the time.

"We had a state-room, and were hurled together into one corner, and I was stunned, but he was unhurt.

"He at once decided to act, and he did so, and cruelly.

"Do you see this?"

Detective Dana held up his arm as he spoke, and showed that his left hand was gone.

"Well, he has studied medicine and surgery, and you see he is no bad surgeon, for he severed my hand with a pocket-knife.

"The pain and bleeding revived me, and as he deemed himself free, I told him I had written the story of his crime to some one whom I told to open the letter in a day or two if I failed to appear.

"He sprung at me, but just then our car toppled and fell into the stream with the wreck of the rest of the train.

"I struggled for life as I was swept away, and being a good swimmer reached the shore just at the door of a small farm-house, and, fortunately for me, the country doctor was there, having taken shelter from the storm.

"He dressed my wound and then hastened away to the scene of the accident.

"Well, my friends, I lay for a couple of months in that farm-house, delirious with fever; but I came 'round all right in the end.

"I believed that my man had been killed when the car fell; but still, I went to his house to see, and I went in the disguise of a woman.

"I saw his lawyer and learned that he had visited home and then mysteriously disappeared, and a large reward was offered for news regarding him.

"This convinced me that he had escaped death, gone home, got what money he could, and fearful of my letter being opened, as I said it would be, he had fled to escape the gallows.

"I felt glad at this, though I determined to capture him yet; but I would have hated to see the Seldon Hall and the large estate of Judge Seldon fall into his crime-stained hands."

"Seldon Hall! Judge Leslie Seldon, you say?" asked Detective Dewhurst in a suppressed tone.

"Yes, the man was Rudolph Seldon, son of late Judge Leslie Seldon, the millionaire."

"My God! can this be true?" and Dare Dewhurst seemed strangely moved by the words of the armed detective.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE MAN-HUNTERS' LEAGUE.

DARE DEWHURST had learned well how to school all emotion, and yet the words of the detective seemed to move him deeply.

He arose from where he was sitting in the lamplight, and walked over into the shadow, as though not wishing to have the others see his face.

Both Dick Dana and Howard Harvey saw that he was moved to the soul about something. But what?

It must be that he knew Judge Leslie Seldon and his son.

He had not before known the name of the man whom he was tracking as the murderer of Cashier Clark.

The one whom he had seen chloroform Mr. Lindo, the diamond merchant, and had arrested, he did not seem to know as Rudolph Seldon, or else he had kept strangely quiet about it.

He could not then have known Rudolph Seldon personally.

At last he turned to the table and took his seat once more.

His face was calm now, and he said, quietly:

"When did Judge Seldon die, Mr. Dana?"

The detective gave the date.

"He was reputed to be a very rich man?"

"Yes; a millionaire it was said."

"Do you know how his property was left?"

"The bulk of it to his son, Rudolph; in fact, all of it, excepting one legacy of fifty thousand to some unknown heir who had a claim on him, yet could not be found, it seems."

"Then there were a few minor legacies to old servants, distant kin and such."

"Did you see the will?"

"Well, yes, for I saw the lawyer read it."

"Who was present?"

"Rudolph Seldon and myself, besides the lawyer."

"And the lawyer?"

"Was Ernest Wilber, Esquire, the manager of Judge Seldon's estate, as I understood it, and sole executor of the will."

"Was the name of this missing heir mentioned?"

"I really forget it if it was."

"And what was the nature of Judge Seldon's disease?"

"Consumption."

"Had he no wife?"

"In a few words that passed between Rudolph Seldon and Lawyer Wilber I learned that Mrs. Seldon had died long years before when her son was but five years old."

"Did you know the Judge, Mr. Dewhurst?"

"Yes."

"And his son?"

"Well, yes, and I met him only a few weeks ago."

"Indeed! then he is the man I am looking for, and the one you wish to find to clear your good name of the stigma of being the murderer of Cashier Clark."

"Would to Heaven I had but known it sooner!" and the words were uttered with a vehemence that fairly startled those who heard him.

"The man is a fugitive from the fear of my letter, so dares not claim his inheritance; but I have set out to find him, for only when he is hanged will I have my revenge for this," and Detective Dana held up his handless arm once more.

Then he added quickly:

"Did you see him only a few weeks ago?"

"I did."

"Where?"

"Here in New York City; but let me ask you if you have noticed of late in the papers a story of a diamond robbery?"

"A Mr. Lindo?"

"The same."

"It was at a hotel— Ha! now I recall when I saw your name, which has been worrying me; you were the detective, the mysterious man who arrested him, and then disappearing were believed for a while to have been the robber?"

"I was the man, and I'll tell you how it happened."

Dare Dewhurst then told his story, and added:

"As I was myself a fugitive, I dared not court notoriety, so left the hotel and went into hiding."

"The criminal was a bold fellow and seized upon this fact to prove his innocence, and he was released and had the sympathy of all."

"You know how it ended, for Captain Williams suspected him, sent detectives to shadow him, and one of them lost his life, thus making the man, Roger Ravenfield, a murderer as well as a thief."

"Yes, he was a daring, bold fellow, for I had all of the accounts of the affair, and could not but wish I could win Mr. Lindo's reward of twenty-five thousand dollars by capturing the English crook."

"He was no Englishman, Detective Dana."

"The papers so asserted, and that he had joined Lindo abroad."

"True; but he had gone there to join him, and to rob him."

"I did not suspect that Rudolph Seldon was the man who killed Cashier Clark, any more than do you suspect that he is the man Roger Ravenfield, who played his part so well against the diamond merchant, Lindo."

The words were spoken slowly and distinctly, and brought both Detective Dana and Harvey Howard to their feet with exclamations of amazement.

"Yes, Detective Dana, the murderer of Cashier Clark and his intended robber, the man who chloroformed Merchant Isaac Lindo and escaped by drugging Detectives Boland and Lucas, thus causing the death of the latter, are one and the same person, so we are on the right trail."

"I went to Mr. Lindo, and he loaned me money to continue my work as a detective, and I wrote to Howard here to come on and join me in the good work, for he had his name to clear also of ignominy."

"You are now with us, and we will prove a trio of man-hunters who shall not know the word failure, and we will run down Rudolph Seldon, Barney, the keeper, and Con Carter and his counterfeiter companion who escaped."

"I am well supplied with funds, and I have learned this city pretty well and feel assured that Seldon has not left here, though he pretended to do so."

"Now what say, Dana and Howard, is it a league between us three?"

"Yes," firmly said Harvey Howard.

"To the end."

"Yes, we are to the bitter end, the *Man-Hunters' League*," was the stern response of Detective Dana, and he raised his handless arm heavenward as though to emphasize his words the more.

CHAPTER XL.

THE REVEREND SHAMUS O'BRIAN.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS had not given up all hope of yet capturing the clever man who had escaped from the clutches of the law, and had registered against him the death of Detective Lucas.

The papers were playing upon him daily for not catching the clever crook, and yet the chief had two dozen cunning detectives striving to win the very generous rewards offered for his apprehension, as the police force and detective agency had also offered liberal sums for his capture, in addition to what the city and Mr. Lindo had named as an inducement to spur the Secret Service men on.

"The man who captures that fellow will win everlasting fame and a fair-sized fortune," had Captain Williams said to his men, and they bestirred themselves accordingly.

Poor Boland hardly took any rest, and having money of his own in bank, he dropped all other work and devoted himself to the capture of Roger Ravenfield.

One evening the chief sat late in his office.

It was Sunday night and he was alone, and trying to think over what could be done to spur his men on, when suddenly a form glided into the room.

He was surprised, for his officer on duty had reported no visitor, and more, he had not heard his visitor enter the room until he saw him.

The chief saw before him a clergyman, smooth-shaven, sleek-looking, gold-spectacled, dressed in a suit of perfect-fitting black, with immaculate white tie and a "Repent-oh-child-of-sin" expression upon his face that was pitiful to behold.

He held in his crossed hands a prayer-book, and seemed to have come especially upon the war-path for the sinful soul of the chief.

Captain Williams eyed him with interest and devoured him, so to speak, at a glance.

"Well, sir, how can I serve you? But first tell me how you came in unannounced?" and the chief spoke pleasantly.

"Behold! the watchman sleepeth at his post, and I glided by him like one with slippers on, oh, child of woe!" came the answer, in a sepulchral tone, that sounded as though it emerged from the depths of a tomb.

The chief struck his bell with a force that made the clergyman start and roll up his eyes anxiously.

An officer appeared to answer his summons.

"Who is on duty at the door, Emmons?" sternly asked the chief, and the man addressed gazed at the parson as though wondering how he got there.

"I am, chief, and I fear I have been lax in my duty, sir, as I see this gentleman here; but I have been up for two weeks with my dying child, you know," and the man's voice choked.

"I know it, my good Emmons, and I excuse you from duty for a couple of days to rest."

"Only your ambition to do your work caused you to report for duty."

"Order Andrews to take your place, and tell him to keep his eyes open, for a wolf might get in in sheep's clothing," and the chief gave a sly glance at the parson, who muttered in the same hollow tone:

"Heaven forbid!"

"I thank you, chief," and Emmons turned away, while Captain Williams devoted his attention to his visitor with:

"Now, sir, excuse my delay, and make known your business, please."

"My name you will find here, sir."

The chief glanced at the card handed to him, a card on which was printed:

REVEREND SHAMUS O'BRIAN,
Missionary-at-large.

"Well, Mr. O'Brian, I should say you were very much at large, for a man of your cloth to be prowling the streets of this sinful city at this hour of the night."

"You pronounce my name wrong, sir," said the visitor, in his deep tones, and with an Irish accent that was unmistakable.

"I am Frinch, you know, sir, and my name is pronounced S-h-a-m-o-o-s O'B-r-e-o-n, with accent on the last syllable of each name, and— Oh!"

The exclamation was accompanied by a muttered something from the chief that sounded very like:

"D— your name!"

Then came sharply:

"What do you want here, sir—quick, how much, for you are begging for the leathen, of course."

To the surprise of the chief, the Reverend O'Brian, as he called himself, broke forth in laughter, and then came the words:

"Pardon me, Captain Williams, but if I can deceive you, then my disguise is perfect."

"I am Mr. Dewhurst, sir."

Captain Williams sprung from his seat, and grasped his visitor's hand, while he said:

"I pardon your fooling me, sir, in my pleasure at seeing you, for I have sought the town over to find you."

"And I have to thank you, sir, for the stand you took in my favor; but I have come to have a confidential talk with you, if you will permit."

"Gladly, so be seated, Mr. Dewhurst," and the chief came from behind his desk and sat down near him.

"You, sir, were the only one who did not believe me a thief, and I feel grateful to you for your confidence."

"I have been in the city the while, and I have been doing some detective duty for myself, but come to you now for help."

"All I can do for you, sir, I will."

"Let me first tell you something in confidence, and ask you to take my word for my innocence, until I can bring all proofs necessary."

"Will you trust me, Chief Williams?"

"Mr. Dewhurst, when you came to me with your prisoner, I read your face as an honest one; but when you came just now with your whine and cant, I set you down as a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"Knowing you now, I trust you, and I wish to congratulate you upon your very remarkable make-up as a clergyman—the bishop, sir, would believe you genuine," and the chief laughed, while the detective said:

"Captain Williams, I left the hotel that night, because I sought to hide from publicity, and you will understand it when I tell you that I am a fugitive, not from justice, but the law, from injustice."

"I was arrested with every appearance of being guilty against me, guilty of murder and robbery, and my trial would have sent me to the gallows as I then believed."

"But a friend, believing in my innocence, and that of one other, also in prison under circumstantial evidence, bribed the assistant keeper, a rascal, to release us."

"He got his money, and when we were free, because I would not herd with the scoundrel, he sought to betray me, and would have done so, had not my fellow-prisoner overheard his plot with an officer and come back to my car and warned me."

"This fellow-prisoner went his way, to enter upon a life where he was unknown, and I took to Secret-Service work, to find the real murderer and robber of Cashier Clark of the Bank of D—."

"Ah! now I know you, sir."

"You are Mr. Octave Archer?" quietly said Captain Williams.

"I was, and hope to be again when I run the man to earth for whose crime I have been made to suffer."

"I have followed my own plans, Chief Williams, and needing aid sent for my friend, my fellow-prisoner."

"He joined me here last night."

"I was also recognized by one whose life I had saved—a member of General Cook's Rocky Mountain Detectives."

"I know of them well, sir, and have met men of the band."

"He recognized me as I was, through a disguise, and to my joy I made a discovery that he knew me to be innocent of killing Cashier Clark."

Dare Dewhurst then told the story of Detective Dana to Chief Williams, who was so interested that he forgot that the night was wearing away.

Then the young man said:

"Now, Chief Williams, I have come to you for your aid, for Dana, Harvey and myself are a league of three to hunt this man Seldon, Ravenfeld, or whatever else he may call himself, to the gallows."

"But I wish to ask you for special papers and report to you as our chief, though no one else than you is to know our secret."

"You shall each have a special badge of my agency, and papers such as you ask, Detective Dewhurst, while no one shall know aught of your affairs," was the prompt answer of the chief.

And thus armed with authority Dare Dewhurst soon after left the detective headquarters to return to his own, while, as Captain Williams drove homeward, he muttered, to himself:

"What a startling coincidence, and how strange."

"But that man will win the game he is playing, or I mistake him."

CHAPTER XLI.

"DOCTOR DELMAR."

A phaeton, drawn by two spirited, stylish horses, was rolling through Central Park, with a fair driver holding the reins in a style that showed nerve and skill.

There were two persons in the vehicle, the young and beautiful driver and a gentleman of sixty, with the appearance of having been an in-

valid, in fact his arm was worn in a sling and bandaged.

Behind, in the rumble, was a diminutive specimen of coach-boy, or, in coaching parlance, a "Tiger," and he sat up in regulation style, still as a poker, arms folded, and was in a dark-blue livery.

A glance into the faces of the two in the carriage and the reader recognizes old friends.

One is the retired millionaire miner, Stapleton, and the other his lovely daughter, Joyce.

True to his promise Mr. Stapleton took his daughter traveling for a few months abroad, and returning to America bought an elegant home in New York, which Joyce furnished with the elegance which her refined taste prompted.

Fond of horses, her father purchased for her a stylish pair of chestnuts which she drove herself, and she was giving him an airing in beautiful Central Park, his first outing since an accident he had met with a month before from his horse falling with him.

Since their arrival in New York, Joyce had been sought out by the best people, and invited everywhere; but she seemed rather to prefer a quiet home-life, and indulged in it as much as she was able to do so.

Suitors she soon had by the score, for, beautiful, elegant, and known to be an heiress, she at once became an acknowledged belle.

Mr. Stapleton was sorry that his daughter did not go out more, for he seemed to wish to have her forget a past he knew was ever present with her, to wipe out from her heart the memory of Octave Archer.

But in the beautiful eyes, when her face was in repose, there shone a light that was looking back into the past, a hope for the future.

She had not forgotten Octave Archer.

She never could.

Even did she never again cross his path, she was a woman not to forget. Even did she become the wife of another, she would know that Octave Archer held her heart.

She had not heard from him since the day of his escape from the jail in D—.

Would she ever hear of him again?

Would he ever prove his innocence?

Still she believed him then not guilty, and she had not changed her mind.

She had had a letter from Mrs. Burns in far-away Texas.

It simply told her that her son had arrived and that they were well, had a cozy home, and, but for the shadow upon Howard, they would all be happy.

"Father, I do not like that man's face," said Joyce, as a horseman passed.

"Strange, I rather like it, for I have seen him before."

"So have I, and he is almost impertinent, he stares so."

"A beautiful woman must expect to attract admiration, my child."

She smiled at the well-put compliment, and swept by the horseman, who was going their way, and had drawn his horse to a walk.

He was well mounted, and certainly rode well, for his horsemanship had attracted much attention.

A handsome figure, he dressed well, his riding-suit fitting him perfectly.

There was a spice of the dandy about him, many thought, for a man whose hair was white, for his boots were of the latest cut, gold spurs were upon the heels, and gauntlet gloves fitted well his small hands.

He wore a slouch hat with cord, white corduroy skin-tight knee-breeches and a velvet riding-jacket of dark blue.

His mustache and imperial had the ends waxed, and were not white like his hair, and he always wore eye-glasses.

Suddenly a wild cry of alarm arose behind, and vehicles pulled to the right and left, to avoid a runaway team.

Quickly the horseman wheeled and spurred in between the phaeton and the runaways, thus urging them away and saving a smash-up.

But the spirited horses made a plunge, and the strength of Joyce was not sufficient to rein them back, and they shot away like the wind.

There was a cry of horror from many in the crowded vehicles near, as the chestnuts rushed on in the path of the runaways, and yet Joyce did not for an instant lose her presence of mind.

Her father was helpless with his broken arm to aid her, and the Tiger was saucer-eyed with fright, while his strength was not to be taken into consideration.

But Joyce held the reins well in hand, guided her team as well as she could, swerving them from a vehicle here, or a pair of horses there, and keeping them well in the road.

But ahead was a hill, and there a mass of vehicles, striving to clear the way.

Here, there a Park policeman was seen, trying to do his duty, but all saw, with bated breath, that a tragedy was at hand.

Not there came the rattle of hoofs, a horseman dashed by the phaeton, and his words gave hope:

"Hold hard to your phaeton! I will check them!"

He was alongside the off chestnut in an in-

stant, bent from his saddle, caught his gloved hand well in the bit of the animal nearest to him, and with an exhibition of strength, nerve and skill, brought the runaways back upon their haunches with a suddenness which would have thrown the occupants of the phaeton upon the dashboard but for his ready warning.

A wild cheer greeted his bold act, and as a gentleman sprung from a passing buggy, and seized the nigh horse to check his rearing, he called out:

"That was well done, sir! I congratulate you upon your nerve."

"*Je vous remerci, monsieur*—I beg ze pardon, monsieur; but I thank you," was the answer, the horseman raising his hat, and changing from French to English, as though remembering that he was not in his own country.

Then turning to the phaeton he continued, as he bowed low:

"I have ze pleasir, mees, to congratulate zou."

"And I, sir, to thank you with all my heart," said Joyce, speaking in French, while her father also joined his thanks, adding:

"I beg your card, sir."

"With much of pleasir, monsieur," and the horseman, the same whom Joyce had said a few moments before she did not like, handed over his card, bent low in his saddle and rode away, while the gentleman who had sprung to the bit of the other horse, until he called two Park police to them, raised his hat and said:

"Permit me to congratulate you, Mr. Stapleton, upon your escape; that was as bold an act as I ever saw, and well done. The Frenchman has nerve."

"Ah, Captain Williams, I thank you."

"My daughter, this is Captain Williams, Chief of the Metropolitan Secret Service, who recovered my lost pocketbook for me, you remember."

"And I have to thank Captain Williams for his ready aid just now," and Joyce extended her hand, perfectly cool after her adventure, which so nigh proved fatal, but pale.

"The French gentleman did it all, Miss Stapleton," was the reply of the gallant captain, who was then suffering from a blow given him by the hoof of the horse he had seized hold of.

"And who is the brave gentleman, sir?"

"I cannot tell you, Miss Stapleton, though I have seen him often before in the Park, sometimes driving a handsome pair, at other times on horseback."

"You have his card, Mr. Stapleton," and the chief turned as though anxious to know who the nervy horseman was.

Mr. Stapleton raised the card and read:

"DOCTOR DU DELMAR,

"No. — Bond street,

"New York."

"A new-comer, I guess," said the chief, as he stood aside and allowed the phaeton to continue its way, as Joyce had insisted upon driving on home.

But he shadowed the phaeton in his buggy until he saw the spirited horses draw up at the millionaire's door, so anxious was he about the beautiful driver.

CHAPTER XLII.

A TWIN ADVENTURE.

UPON the day of Joyce Stapleton's runaway adventure in Central Park, New York, another gallant rescue of a beautiful woman was made, this time by a young clergyman.

He was standing by the rail of a Fulton Ferry boat, which was densely crowded and going rapidly in toward her slip, when suddenly another boat coming out was borne by the swiftly-flowing tide directly down upon the one from the New York shore.

There were wild cries of alarm, a struggling, fighting mass of humanity, a shock and crash, and the boats rebounded from each other, while into the seething waters fell several persons, among them a young woman whose beauty had attracted much attention.

In an instant the one in ministerial garb had sprung into the river, and all held their breath in horror and surprise for a moment, as he disappeared beneath the waves.

But he arose with the lady in his arms, and with a few bold strokes reached the pier head, where ropes were lowered to him from the stern of a schooner lying there, and he, and the one he had rescued, were drawn on board.

A cheer went up from the crowded boat for the brave rescuer, while two men were dragged out of the river on board, but another sunk forever beneath the waves.

A carriage was sent to come into the warehouse yard, and the rescuer escorted the rescued to it, and aided her to a seat.

"You will come, sir," she said, pleadingly, and, wet though he was, he obeyed, and gave the number she told him to the driver.

The vehicle halted before a snug little home in a secluded street, and the lady was escorted to the door.

"You will come in, sir."

"No; I will drive at once to my home, thank you."

"You have not even told me your name, and I owe you my life."

"Shall I set the example by saying that I am Mrs.—Why, how silly of me, I mean Miss Delmar?"

"My name is Dewhurst, Miss Delmar, and I am most happy in having been of-service to you."

"Now change your wet clothes with all haste—good-morning."

"You will give me your address?"

"I live over in New York, and—"

"Then you will come to see me?"

He hesitated and then answered:

"Yes."

Another moment he was gone, little dreaming that while he was saving the life of the unacknowledged wife of Rudolph Seldon, alias Roger Ravenfield, alias Doctor Du Delmar, that very wicked individual was, through a strange coincidence, rescuing from death the woman he so well loved, Joyce Stapleton.

Dare Dewhurst drove to his rooms and was soon in different attire, and thinking over his adventure.

It recalled to him a service he had rendered once before to a lovely girl in the far West, and when he was also in the disguise of a clergyman.

And it set him to thinking about that one whom he believed far away.

She had freed him from prison, and for a purpose.

That purpose to prove himself guiltless of the crimes of murder and robbery.

"Thank Heaven there is hope for me, and that one day I can go to her; but not until I have all proofs, not until I have run down that man, will I go into her presence."

Then he thought of this other beautiful woman whom he had that day snatched from death, and he wondered who she was.

He had noted her slip of the tongue about Mrs. Delmar, for his detective work was making him very watchful of everything.

The next day he was determined upon making a journey, and upon his return in a few days he would find out more about this lovely Miss Delmar, he decided.

The next morning he started upon his journey, taking an early train, and settling himself comfortably in his seat in the Pullman car for a long ride, he opened the morning paper.

It was his habit to read carefully every day all the papers, looking for any item that might be of interest to him.

Suddenly his eyes fell upon something which, schooled as he was to hide all emotion, brought an exclamation to his lips, and caused his face to pale and flush by turns.

What he read was as follows:

"A NARROW ESCAPE FROM DEATH!"

"Yesterday afternoon, while driving in the Park, with her father, Miss Joyce Stapleton, one of New York's most lovely maidens, and an heiress, very nearly lost her life by the running away of her spirited pair of chestnut thoroughbreds, which she was driving."

"A runaway team coming along behind startled them and as Mr. Stapleton has a broken arm, he was unable to lend any aid, and his daughter was forced to face the situation, which she did in a brave and skillful manner."

"For a quarter of a mile she kept her horses in the space hastily opened for her, and steered clear of all collisions with a nerve that won for her loud praise; but upon nearing the hill at Mount St. Vincent there was a block of vehicles, and her horses flying like the wind would have dashed in among them, but for the daring and skillful rescue of a horseman, who rode alongside, grasped the bit of one of the runaways and brought them to a halt, just as Secret Service Inspector Williams sprung from his buggy and seized the other animal."

"No one seemed to know who the dashing, handsome horseman was, but our reporter learned from Captain Williams that he had given his name to Mr. Stapleton as Doctor Delmar, of Bond street, and that he was a Frenchman."

"Our reporter on his rounds also learned of another bold rescue of a young and lovely lady yesterday, when two ferry-boats collided near the Brooklyn slip."

"The lady in question was thrown into the river, and but for the fact that a young clergyman sprang in after her she would have been drowned."

"As the two drove away hastily, the name of neither the lady nor her brave preserver could be ascertained."

It was the former article that impressed Dare Dewhurst, for he murmured:

"She has returned from abroad then and is living in New York."

"And how strange that a man named Delmar should have rescued her from death."

"Heaven bless him; but I must know more of these Delmars."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE LAWYER AND THE DETECTIVE.

"A GENTLEMAN to see you, sir."

It was the Sabbath morning, and in his dressing-gown and slippers, Lawyer Ernest Wilber was seated in the library of Seldon Hall, glancing over the morning papers, unmindful that the church-bells were calling loudly for all sinners to come to prayer.

It was a call a Mohammedan would never ignore, but then Christians are not such devout worshippers as those we look upon as heathens.

The lawyer arose at the words of Dorlan and turned toward his visitor.

He felt a pricking of conscience at neglect of duty when he beheld a young clergyman, and he involuntarily put his hand in his pocket determined to be liberal.

"Lawyer Wilber, I infer, sir?"

"Such is my name, and very much at your service, sir; be seated, please."

"Can you pardon a Sabbath-day call, sir, when I tell you that my time is much occupied, and I ran up to your town especially to see you, sir?"

"Oh, yes, for I often am compelled to transact business on Sunday, sir, though I enjoy it as a day of rest."

"May I ask who it is that I have the honor of meeting?"

"Ah! beg pardon," and with a glance at the door, to see if Dorlan had departed, he continued:

"My name is Dewhurst, sir, and I am a detective, in this disguise for reason that it is best suited to the work on hand."

"Ah!" and Lawyer Wilber had a choking sensation in the throat.

He recalled that duel in the little glen some three years before when Raoul Ford fell by his hand, and he also remembered that there had been a certain will which he had had a hand in doctoring.

"How can I serve you, sir?" he asked huskily.

"Mr. Wilber, I come to you not only professionally, but as man to man, and I beg to show you my authority from the Secret-Service Inspector of New York, as also one from General Dave Cook, chief of the Rocky Mountain Detectives, while I am myself chief of a Man-Hunters League in New York."

"Your word is sufficient, sir—oh, yes, I see you have authority in papers and badges," and the lawyer glanced at his visitor nervously.

"As you are satisfied, sir, I wish to ask you to tell me all you know about the heir to this home and estate—I refer to Mr. Rudolph Seldon?"

"Mr. Seldon, sir, at present is not to be found, having disappeared most mysteriously some ten months ago."

"Are you aware of his whereabouts, sir? I ask in full authority to know."

"I am not, sir."

"Are you aware of his fate?"

"Is he dead?"

"No; or, rather, I think not; but do you know why he is now a fugitive heir from such a magnificent property?"

"I do not know just why, but, to be candid with you, Detective Dewhurst, I will say that my client is a very fast man, and, I am convinced, got into some scrape which prevented his risking his liberty, perhaps his life, by coming to claim his share of the Seldon estate."

"As you seem in some doubt, sir, let me say that such is the case."

"I expected it, felt almost assured of it, in fact."

"You say his share of this estate?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then he is not heir to all?"

"No."

"May I ask you something of this will? But let me first tell you that I have had you and this house shadowed for six months, and am convinced that you have held no communication with the heir."

"You are right, sir; and I half-suspected I was being shadowed."

"But to the will?"

"Yes, sir."

"Judge Seldon wrote his will, for some purpose leaving the names blank, to be filled in at the last minute."

"But he died suddenly; though he had been dying for a long time, he was expected to live for a week or more, when he went off one night, the night of his son's arrival."

"Now, I was left the sole executor, and as I had a special document left me regarding the will, I filled in the names as I knew Judge Seldon meant it should be, and against the wish of Rudolph Seldon."

"Ah! this means that he is not the heir, then?"

"It means that there is an heir, sir, to the estate, the entire fortune, excepting a legacy of fifty thousand dollars to Mr. Rudolph Seldon, one of twenty thousand to myself, and a few smaller sums for faithful servants."

"But cannot Mr. Seldon, as the son, break this will leaving to another what he is legally entitled to?"

"Detective Dewhurst, I will only say that were Mr. Seldon to come here to day, under no fear or cloud, he could not break that will of Judge Seldon, as the heir has a prior, a better claim than he."

"Indeed! and who is this heir, or is it an heiress, if you will be good enough to tell me?"

"That, sir, I cannot tell you; but I hope to place the heir, or heiress, whichever it be, in possession of the fortune before another year, and I am working to that end, while, if I have proof that Rudolph Seldon has been guilty of a crime, his act forfeits his claim even to the legacy left him, for it was on conditions, and it will go to the heir or heiress named."

"I thank you, Mr. Wilber, for your extreme

kindness in this matter, and I would say to you to leave the finding of Mr. Rudolph Seldon to me, as well as the proof that he has done that which will forfeit his legacy, for though I wish you to keep the secret, I will tell you that he is a card-sharp, a bank-robber, and twice a murderer."

"My God! can he be so vile as this?"

"He is, and worse, and I am on the search for him, and I will find him!"

Mr. Wilber decided that the detective would, when he looked into his fearless, handsome face.

Dare Dewhurst then gave the lawyer his address, and added:

"If you can find Mr. Seldon, sir, it will be twenty-five thousand dollars in your pocket."

"Detective Dewhurst, had as I know Rudolph Seldon to be, he was once my friend, and I would never touch a dollar of blood-money for his capture."

"I would so believe of you, sir; but you have my address, and if you learn aught that I wish to know, pray communicate with me, sir, and you shall not be known in the matter, I pledge you."

"I thank you for your pledge, and I will do so, for Rudolph Seldon deserves to suffer for his crimes, only I would never touch a dollar of reward offered for his apprehension," and Ernest Wilber spoke in a tone of resolution that showed the detective that he meant all that he said.

"Why, sir, he may be called the King of Crooks; but I have devoted my life to tracking him to the steps of the gallows!" and the look and suppressed tone of the speaker caused Lawyer Wilber to mutter as his visitor departed:

"That detective has some deeper cause than his professional ambition for hunting down Rudolph Seldon—there is revenge at the bottom of his detective work!"

And Lawyer Ernest Wilber made a very shrewd guess.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE PLEDGED JEWELS.

SEVERAL days after the runaway in Central Park, Joyce Stapleton was seated in her beautiful sitting-room engaged in putting the finishing touches upon a portrait she had painted of her father.

She looked very lovely as she sat there in her working-dress, surrounded by every luxury the heart could wish, and her suite of rooms a model of neatness and elegance, and everywhere bearing the impress of a refined taste.

Presently there came into the room her maid, Nanette, bringing word that a gentleman was in the parlor who wished to see her.

"Did he send no card, Nanette?"

"No, miss."

"Where is my father?"

"Gone down-town, Miss Joyce."

"Who can it be that has called at this time, I wonder?"

"I never saw him before, miss, but he's a handsome young man."

"I suppose I must go down to see him," said Joyce, with a sigh.

And she threw aside her apron, and, without a look into the mirror, went down to the grand parlors.

A young man arose to meet her, and bowed low, while he said:

"As you have not seen me since I was a youth, Miss Stapleton, let me introduce myself—I am Howard Burns."

"Why, you have changed, indeed, in the ten years since I saw you, for then you were a lad of fourteen, and I a girl of ten."

"I am glad to see you, Mr.—Mr.—"

"I am known as Harvey Howard now, Miss Stapleton, while I am under a cloud, so to speak; but I have to thank you that I am not behind the walls of a prison, for it was your goodness that got me out, and I can only prove my appreciation of it by showing you some day that I was innocent."

"I have had the faith that you could do so, Mr. Harvey; but tell me, how is your good mother?"

"I had a letter from her but yesterday, and she was well, thank you."

"Pardon me, but I fear you run great risks in being here."

"No; for I am unknown in New York, and I came here to work out my salvation and aid Mr. Archer to prove his innocence, also, and we are on the highway to success."

"Mr. Archer is then in the city?" said Joyce with a slight start.

"He is, Miss Stapleton, yet incognito, for he is playing a part, as I am, and I can only say that he is the chief of a Secret-Service League which he is using as a means to an end."

"Heaven grant that he may accomplish that end."

"I say amen to that most warmly, for his success is mine, though outside of selfish motives I wish for Mr. Archer every success; but I come to you from him, Miss Stapleton."

"Indeed! I did not expect to hear from Mr. Archer until he had accomplished a certain end."

"It is true, but he begs to send you this box of jewels, which you pledged to Levi Goldberg

in Chicago, to get money for my mother to help Mr. Archer and myself out of prison."

The face of Joyce Stapleton turned pale, and she wore a look anxious and almost frightened. Then the red blood suffused her countenance and she asked:

"Do you mean that this is the box of jewels that I left in Chicago?"

"I do; but is it not, is there a mistake?"

"No, this is the case."

"Pray open it and see if all are there, and here, Miss Stapleton, is the sum over the amount raised on the jewelry, which you gave my mother."

"I do not understand all this," said Joyce in an annoyed tone.

"Let me explain that Mr. Archer, knowing that you had taken your own money, and what your jewels were pledged for, to give to my mother to free us from prison, wishes to return to you the jewelry and the amount in full expended, or advanced by you."

"But I do not need the money, and besides, I had sent Mr. Goldberg half the amount due."

"True, and here is the statement in full, and just the sum, so please see if your jewelry is all right."

Joyce opened the case and glanced over it.

She could not but remember how she had hidden her secret from her father, and she was glad to see her treasures safe again.

But in some way their return and the money, seemed to cancel Octave Archer's debt of gratitude to her.

Did it sever him from her, she wondered?

Did he wish to sever the tie, she asked herself?

"Yes, all are here, thank you, and the money is correct."

"Mr. Archer is very kind, yet I fear he has deprived himself of much-needed funds to—"

"Oh, no, for, as I said, he is chief of a detective league, and he has been able to make considerable money in his work for others, keeping in view the one aim to clear himself in the end and bring the real criminal to justice."

"As he had the money to spare, he wished to cancel his pecuniary obligation to you, Miss Stapleton, though the debt of gratitude he owes you, yes, and which I owe to you, nothing can ever cancel."

"Yet how did he know my jewels were pledged?"

"As I told you, he is a detective, and a natural-born one, too, for he is a wonder in Secret Service work."

"He discovered how you had aided him, and he now cancels the debt by sending your jewels and the money."

"Not knowing whether your father was aware of what you had done, he sent me to call upon you when he knew Mr. Stapleton was away from home."

"And I must thank you for doing so, Mr. Howard, for to be frank with you my father knew nothing of my acts."

"Had I needed money he would have given it; but like all others, he believed Mr. Archer guilty, and I know would never have advanced me a dollar, and so I acted as I deemed best."

"I am sorry Mr. Archer will not let me help him further; but I thank him for the return of my jewels," and it was very evident that Joyce would have been glad to have still held her claim upon the man she loved and had so nobly befriended.

After a few minutes' longer conversation, Harvey Howard took his departure, and Joyce Stapleton was left to her own meditations, and they were strange thoughts that came upon her, for here she was, an heiress to millions, a beauty and a belle, accomplished, and all that heart could wish about her; refusing offers from men who had won great names in their country's history, men who loved her devotedly, because she loved another, and that other a fugitive from the law's clutches, a man accused of murder and robbery, and one whom she had aided by pledging her jewelry to escape from the gallows, for she knew nothing of Dick Dana, the one-armed detective, and what he could prove had it come to a trial of Octave Archer for his life.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE "DOCTOR" AT HOME.

To and fro, to and fro, like a tiger in his cage, as nervously, as untiringly, a man paces his room, his eyes bent upon the floor, his hands clasped behind his back, and his lips moving as though muttering the thoughts that flit through his brain.

The man is "Doctor Delmar," or at least that is what he is called.

He is the man who saved Joyce Stapleton and her father from injury, in truth almost certain death, by his bold rescue in the nick of time, when he checked the runaway team.

He had given his card bearing the name:

"DOCTOR DELMAR."

The address was upon the card, and this in the very face of the Secret Service chief.

But Captain Williams was human, and he could not see in "Doctor Delmar" the King of Crooks, Rudolph Seldon, alias Roger Ravenfield.

Roger Ravenfield's hair was not white, and he wore no beard.

This man's hair was white, and he wore a mustache and imperial with waxed ends, à la Napoleon, which changed the entire expression of his face.

The "crook's" complexion was fair, the "doctor's" darkly bronzed, and eye-glasses half hid the expressive eyes.

The "crook" was an Englishman, while the doctor was a Frenchman, and spoke with an accent.

Then, too, the King of Crooks was a thief and murderer, and wanted badly and at once for his crimes; so who could suspect this dashing cavalier of being that wicked individual?

Captain Williams saw so many men, good and bad, and he never forgot a face, a form, or the tones of a voice, once seen or heard.

But this face was wholly changed, the glasses hid the eyes and changed the expression, and the form in a tight-fitting riding-suit was far different from the tweed, loose-fitting suit of the crook as Roger Ravenfield, while the French accent changed the rich tones of his voice.

He had met the "doctor" before, he was sure; but when and where, other than in the Park, Chief Williams could not tell.

And so the King of Crooks, not anxious to linger in such dangerous presence, yet cool as an icicle while there, hastened away, leaving his card with the millionaire.

And the next day the rich man, with such a load of gratitude upon him to the brave rescuer, called upon Doctor Delmar.

He found him occupying a double English-basement house.

Below, there was on one side a real-estate agency, and upon the other a locksmith.

Above, on the left of the hall, was a lawyer's office, and upon the other was Dr. Delmar's office, while the two stories above were his living rooms without doubt.

The large hall was clean and well-furnished, and the door-plate was of silver, bearing the legend:

"DOCTOR DELMAR,

"Specialist.

"Office Hours 12 M. to 1 P. M."

One would judge from this that the doctor's business was principally in his outside practice.

His "office" was a charming one, carpeted, and with stylish leather furniture.

A book-case of medical works was in one corner, a desk in another, with a table upon which were cases of surgical instruments.

A skeleton stood on the marble bracket before the mirror, which revealed him front and back, and it grinned sardonically at the visitor, as though conscious that the doctor would bring him, or her, to a like bony condition.

A door opened into an inner room, and upon this was, in gilt letters, the word:

"Private."

Having sent in his card by the liveried attendant, Mr. Stapleton was at once ushered back through the private office to a rear hall where a handsome stairway led to the floor above.

Here a very different scene met the eye, for though dwelling in elegant luxury himself, Mr. Stapleton was surprised at his superb surroundings.

He was ushered into a large room, half-library and sitting-room, and his artistic eye was reveling in the works of art upon the walls, the rare pieces of statuary and the furnishings, when Doctor Delmar entered and greeted his visitor with the warmth of an old friend.

He was in black, a Prince Albert coat fitting closely his fine form, and he did not look so old as Mr. Stapleton had expected to find him.

He was a handsome man, exceedingly so, and his white hair contrasted well with his black eyes, dark mustache and imperial, and his somber, but elegant attire.

There was one thing that struck Mr. Stapleton as strange, and that was the fact of his wearing his hair banged.

But it was true, his white hair was combed over his forehead, giving him an odd, yet not unhandsome appearance.

The doctor wore a solitaire of rare beauty upon the small finger of his left hand, and its snarl nestled in the folds of his black silk scarf.

His manners were courtly and dignified, though he spoke English with a marked French accent.

Under the circumstances of their meeting, the foundation had been laid for Mr. Stapleton to like Dr. Delmar, and after an hour's visit to him he left, perfectly charmed with him, and had urged him to drive with him *en famille* the following day, which invitation was accepted with thanks.

The "doctor" had, without appearing to do so, let it be known that he was of a noble race, had seen much of the world, and practiced his profession from love of it, and to help science, as he was rich and had no need to devote himself to work for a support.

The next day he drove up to the mansion of the millionaire, situated upon Murray Hill, in

as stylish a carriage drawn by as fine a pair of thoroughbreds as could be found in the city.

He was immaculate in his full-dress suit, and bowed low before Joyce as she swept into the room looking her very best, and welcomed him with a warmth at which he felt flattered, for, outside of her appreciation of his gallant act, was the thought that a moment before the runaway she had said she disliked the man, and she was anxious to atone for her unkind criticism of one she had not known, one who had so quickly destroyed the impression formed of him.

From that day Dr. Delmar became a frequent visitor at the Stapleton mansion, and he proved himself a most charming companion.

He sang well, and played the piano with the skilled touch of an artist, while he certainly excelled as a conversationalist; when he would speak French, as he often did with Joyce and her father, both of whom spoke the language fluently.

Mr. Stapleton introduced his new-found friend to his club, and it was but a very few weeks before rumor had it that the French doctor was going to marry Joyce Stapleton, the beauty and heiress.

And so it was that we find Dr. Delmar pacing his room and muttering half-aloud his thoughts, some six weeks after his meeting with Joyce Stapleton.

"She is rich, and she is charming and even more beautiful than is Di, and I believe I could win her."

"But Di?"

"Ah! there is the stumbling-block."

"Yet why need I hesitate on her account?"

"No, I will do it; I will go in and win, and with her fortune I need not crave more, and can go far from here and enjoy the rest of the life that may be mine."

"But it is time for the meeting of my Wolves now, and another time I will finish the plot."

CHAPTER XLVI.

"THE GHOULS OF GOTHAM."

FROM having seen "Doctor Delmar" at home, the reader has discovered that the scheming woman, Di Delmar, had her way, and her wicked husband entered into her plot to gain gold.

Young, for she was not twenty, beautiful, strangely fascinating, the one-time country maiden was determined to live life to its full.

She had plotted to get into society polite through her marriage with Rudolph Seldon, gain a fortune, and make her power felt.

But his secret marriage to her had remained a secret, and his crimes had forced him to fly from his fortune when it was on the very eve of being in his grasp.

Then, as his life was to be evil, she was determined that it should not be long, for, by bold strokes, he could win riches, and then a different fortune was before them, or rather her, for she used him only as a stepping-stone to her own ambitious plans.

So surely do bold deeds make impression upon us that it was proven in her case, for she read where a man was leading a double life in London, and had won riches by fraud, while he was a shining light in church circles in his other life.

So she planned for her husband.

Handsome, elegant, educated, audacious, cool and wicked, there was nothing in the way of his being a leader of men.

But for what?

Evil only to get gold.

Gold was her God. She was its abject worshiper, and she read Rudolph aright in knowing him to be one who would stop at no crime to gain riches.

So she plotted and planned, and while she went into comparative retirement, he went to work to carry out her schemes.

That they were bold ones may be inferred, since "Doctor Delmar" was, under the very eye of the police, a leader of a gang of evil-doers who were a terror to the metropolis.

The detectives spoke of them as the Ghouls of Gotham, while the police named them the Wolves of the Metropolis.

They were bank-breakers at one time, and for awhile a perfect epidemic of safe-robberies occurred.

Then a lull would follow in this species of crime, and next the country-seats of wealthy gentlemen would be entered and despoiled.

Now it would be a handsome home upon the Hudson, and two nights after an elegant villa at New York.

Next a residence at Long Branch would be entered, to follow with a couple of houses along the shores of the Long Island Sound.

Several weeks would see perhaps half a hundred mansions robbed, from Saratoga and Lake George, to Cape May and the shores of Maine.

Then another lull would follow, just as the police felt that they would bag their game with the next bold robbery.

While waiting, the officers of the law would suddenly be startled by a daring and clever diamond robbery from some rich guest in a fashionable hotel.

Next would follow an epidemic of hotel thefts, to again end as suddenly as they were begun,

while the community would be startled by a series of highway robberies.

So it went on until the Ghouls of Gotham had made themselves dreaded in all walks of life, and counting up the public and private rewards offered for the capture of the band, or any one of them, the one who was successful in running them to earth would feel sure of a fortune to support him in luxury for a lifetime.

And this man, Rudolph Seldon, the fugitive heir, a man with a noose about his neck, figuratively speaking, with *aliases* by the score, and disguises untold, was the head and front of the Wolves of the Metropolis—the Ghouls who lived off of their fellow-men!

And, so well did he play his cards, that but one person knew him as he really was, and that one was the beautiful temptress, Di Delmar!

She dwelt in her pretty home in Brooklyn, a mystery even to her servants, and yet without a shadow of suspicion upon her that her life was other than true and noble.

She received few visitors, went out with no one, other than her coachman or maid, gave freely to charity and—lived a lie!

And in New York dwelt her cruel, wicked husband.

To the public he was a French surgeon, a philanthropist; but never to his "Ghoul" was he known by any other name than that of chief;—"Doctor Delmar" was considered the "stool-pigeon," the "decoy" for the famous unknown leader of the robber band.

That he may be the better understood in his double, or treble life, let the reader accompany him to the meeting of the Ghouls.

For some time past a number of men and women have been dropping into the real-estate agency, the lawyer's office and the locksmith's, in the building occupied by Doctor Delmar.

Whichever place they enter, the locksmith's, the agency, the attorney's, or the doctor's office, their steps verge toward a common center.

That center is by private stairs leading from each office to the rooms on the third floor.

Those stair entrances are cleverly concealed, too, so that no one would suspect an exit that way from the various rooms.

The locksmith plies his business by day, and gets the credit from the neighbors for being a hard-working man, as his shop often has a light in it until late at night.

He is so overrun with orders he refuses two-thirds of the work offered; at least he says so, for in reality the lazy fellow is a "Ghoul" in secret and has more profitable work in robbing his fellow-man.

The real-estate agent also does some necessary work, to keep up appearances; but he also is one of the band of Doctor Delmar's Wolves.

It is the same with the attorney.

He is a lawyer, it is true, or has been, but has fallen from grace for evil deeds done in another State, and so is "attorney for the Wolves."

The "doctor" the Wolves do not exactly understand.

They are told that as their membership needs a surgeon, who can dress wounds and heal the sick, when necessary, and not be inquisitive, Doctor Delmar is under salary to do this work.

It is said that he is not a Ghoul, knows nothing of the wicked secret organization; but, as he is a Frenchman, having a practice in the city, he adds to it by obeying calls when sent for by the chief, whom he knows, yet not as a man of crime.

Certain it is that when the locksmith, lawyer and real-estate agent are seen in the councils of the Ghouls, the doctor is never seen there, and, as his English is limited, when questioned, and the band are not French scholars, the one who is the prime Satan of the lot escapes almost without suspicion among his own men, and women, too, for the Wolves have a feminine constituency also.

The next chapter will reveal to the reader something of Doctor Delmar's manner of knowing other men, yet keeping his own light under a bushel, as it were.

CHAPTER XLVII. IN THE WOLF-DEN.

As it was the hour for his regular weekly meeting with his band, Doctor Delmar prepared to go to the council-chamber, which was, as has been said, upon the third story of his dwelling.

Leaving his office, which he had been pacing to and fro, he went up to the floor above to the same lavishly furnished rooms where he had received Mr. Stapleton.

Entering his bed-chamber, he unlocked an iron door set in the massive chimney, and which was concealed by a cleverly constructed book-shelf in front of it, as though hanging there.

But the book-shelf swung open with the iron door, revealing an aperture some five feet in height by three in breadth, while it ran back into the chimney some ten feet—its width, in fact.

The chimney was really a "make believe" on that floor, simply a pipe from below serving to carry off the smoke from fires on the floors downstairs, and the grates in the bedroom never being put into use.

In this vault in the chimney were shelves, drawers and boxes, all seemingly well filled.

It was the store-room of the smaller valuables stolen by the Ghouls—the silver, silks, laces and jewelry.

Sent to the lawyer's office marked "Books," or to the locksmith, marked "Hardware," they were thus taken up into the assembly-rooms of the band, where the plunder was regularly entered into the books, valued, and nothing more was seen of them by the members; but at the next meeting each received in money their share of the amount which the booty had brought.

Often it amounted to a handsome sum each, and again to merely a large week's salary, but this was merely the "commission," for each one was under small pay to make them more faithful and devoted to the interests of all.

Taking from this secret receptacle of stolen booty a coat, the doctor drew it on over the suit he wore.

It was heavily padded and gave him the appearance of weighing sixty pounds over his real weight.

He then drew on a pair of pantaloons, also thereby adding to his size, and drawing off the trim shoes he wore, replaced them by heavy boots with thick soles and insoles and high heels that added over an inch to his height.

The next move of the cunning doctor was to place over his wig of white hair, whose falsity was so cleverly concealed by his bangs, or wig of black hair, while a long false beard completely shielded the lower part of his face.

Not content with this he placed over his head a mask shaped like a skull, white, grinning, hideous, and as the black hair and beard showed beneath, no one would doubt but that they were real.

Drawing a pair of gloves over his small hands, and thus accoutered Dr. Delmar stepped out into the hall and ascended to the floor above.

His key let him into an anteroom, the door of which was stout and iron-bound.

Another door was then opened and Dr. Delmar stepped out upon a *dais* or platform where was a heavy arm-chair with a desk in front of it semi-circular in shape.

A railing was around the desk, and no opening was revealed to permit passage into the large room into which the doctor had entered.

There was not a window in the room, but instead, a skylight overhead, through which came air, and light by day.

There was a door in one side that opened into the hall, and three other narrow ones that connected by secret stairs with the offices of the lawyer and agent, and shop of the locksmith.

Dr. Delmar had planned his house well.

The room occupied one side of the double house, was some fifty feet in length by fifteen in width, and there were a number of chairs in rows in it.

These chairs were occupied when the doctor entered, or most of them were, for there were a few vacant ones here and there.

And the occupants of these chairs?

They were a motley lot, ranging from a well-dressed woman, who might be mistaken for a member of the Sorosis Club, to a beggarly-attired woman bearing a dummy baby in her arms, a doll to appear like a child.

The latter had a look of woe upon her face that was chronic; but just such are often run into in the neighborhood of Fourteenth street in New York, and her counterpart many of my readers will recognize.

Then there were Jew peddlers, a glazier, a dandy clerk, a dude with eye-glasses and cane, a sport, and in fact over a score of people, hardly one of whom was not "made up," and not one of whom but was dodging justice.

Such were the Ghouls, such the den of Wolves over which Dr. Delmar presided as chief.

Each one known to him, not to one of them was he known in *propria persona*, no, not even as Doctor Delmar.

When he entered the Council Chamber, or, as the Sorosis-looking woman cheerfully put it, and not inappropriately, either, the Den of Deviltry, the members arose and bowed silently.

Then they remained standing until "Old Death's-Head," as he was affectionately called—behind his back—took his seat, and all followed his example, showing a respect that many an honest assemblage might copy after toward their presiding officer.

The silence that followed was painful, with the walls hung with black, the floor carpeted so thickly that no sound could be made by a foot-fall, and the queer-looking people gathered there.

Through the glaring sockets of the *papier-mache* skull the eyes of the chief seemed to rest upon each and every one as he said in a voice that was deep and impressive, and amid a deathlike silence:

"I call you to order?"

CHAPTER XLVIII. A NEW MEMBER.

In a hushed kind of manner, as though impressed by their surroundings and awed by the ghastly skull mask of their chief, the Ghouls prepared for the work before them.

There was a book lying upon one side of their chief, open, and with pen and ink at hand.

The chief called the roll from this book, and the names were striking, startling and suggestive.

There was a "Charity Kate" and "Slippery Sam," a "Hawk-Eyes," "Saint Salvation," "Tender Tom," and a few names that appeared to have been really given in baptism.

Then, in the same order as called, the Wolves stepped up to the railing and made their reports of their week's work.

One handed over a watch and chain and a roll of bills, which he had stolen from some unfortunate stranger in the city.

A woman gave in a bolt of silk and box of gloves which she had gotten in her shopping through the stores.

Then there was a silver cup and a dozen spoons given over by another.

"Lucky Rogue" kept up his name and reputation by handing in a bag of gold, one thousand dollars being its value.

And so it went on, one or two failing to "materialize" with anything.

To one of these the chief said, simply:

"Is your conscience troubling you, Tender Tom?"

"No, chief."

"This is the third week you have brought nothing in."

"I know it, chief; but I have been unfortunate."

"Your salary and commission stops to-day, then, until you materialize."

The man turned and went back to his seat without a word of remonstrance.

When all had been handed in and a list entered in the book, the chief said:

"Last week footed up five thousand dollars, and this week will not go so high, I think."

"This must not be, for we can double and treble that amount as a regular business, and must do so."

"This week, on Tuesday, I wish to make a strike on the Sound mansions, and will need the men and the yacht, so be ready."

"I wish you all to keep your eye on Williams and his men this week, and see what they are up to."

"Also try and find out if the police are not up to some mischief against us, for we must be careful."

"There is another Secret Service Agency here, I have discovered."

"It is known as the Man-Hunters' League, but where their quarters are, or how many in the band, I do not know, so it would be well for all of you to find out all you can about them."

"Are there any complaints?"

A silence followed, proving there were none.

"Are there any reports to be handed in?"

Several came up and submitted written papers, which were either suggestions for future work, or reports of special business attended to.

Then the chief said:

"There is a new member to be admitted."

"You, Herndon, vouch for him, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is my duty to remind you that if he goes wrong, your life, as voucher, as well as his, is forfeit."

"I know that, chief."

"You take the risk?"

"I do, sir."

"And his fee?"

"He has the hundred dollars to pay it, sir."

"Admit him!"

The man, who had answered to the name of Herndon, went to the door opening into the hall and disappeared.

He was gone but a short while, and returned accompanied by a man with long gray hair and beard.

He led him up before the railing, where the chief had placed upon a table a black velvet cover upon which were embroidered the few but iron-clad laws of the robber band.

There was a crucifix there also, a small coffin, a human skull, a crimson cup, a red revolver, and a knife with the blade also of carmine hue, horrible objects to gaze upon.

Herndon led the man up to the chief, and said:

"This man desires admittance into our Brotherhood, chief, and, knowing the full responsibility, I vouch for him."

"It is well; but do you, sir, know that no one can become a member of this Brotherhood who has not taken human life?"

"I do, sir," was the deep response.

"You have taken the life of a human being?"

"Yes, of several."

There was a murmur among the Ghouls, one of admiration, for this was a brother to be proud of, they thought.

All had "killed their man," in some way or other, by the pistol, knife or poison, and from varying reasons.

Even the feminine members had done this much, but here was a member who had taken several lives.

So he ranked high from the start.

"You can read the laws there aloud on the velvet pall and see if you are willing to conform to them."

There was a dead silence as the man read in

deep tones what was embroidered on the black velvet.

Then the chief asked:

"Do you mean to conform to them?"

"I do."

"It is death to break a law of this secret Brotherhood of Ghouls."

"I have just read so."

"Then place your right hand on that crucifix, your left upon the skull, and fix your eyes upon the coffin, while you take the oath of brotherhood."

The man obeyed and without a tremor of the voice repeated after the chief the appalling vow that linked his life with the criminal Brotherhood of Ghouls.

At the end came in chorus that was startlingly impressive, from the members present:

"Amen!"

Then the man was led to a seat by Herndon, and, announcing their names in the regular order of roll-call the members stepped up and received their pay, and left as they did so, the new member receiving a slip of paper giving him his orders for the week's work.

Then the chief put out the lights, returned to his rooms, removed his disguise, and "Doctor Delmar" was again at home to attend to any ailments of those of the band who wished to consult him.

CHAPTER XLIX.

DI DELMAR'S VISITOR.

"WHY does he wish me to come to his home?"

"He should know that it is best for me not to do so," and Di Delmar crumpled a piece of paper she held in her hand, and upon which was written:

"Come to me this afternoon at two, and lunch with me."

"I have something to consult you about."

"D. D."

"He should have come here," she continued, and as the bell rung she threw the slip of paper into a waste-basket and settled herself gracefully upon a lounge, with a book in her hand, for she expected a visitor.

That visitor had written a line the day before asking if he might call at that hour and the permission was cheerfully granted.

And Di had been ready dressed, looking her very loveliest, when she received by a messenger the note that had so disturbed her, requesting her to come and see Doctor Delmar.

And as she sat there, strange to say, ready, awaiting the arrival of her expected visitor, she was musing deeply, and the current of her meditations ran in this wise:

"I never loved him, I know."

"I was struck with his splendid appearance, fascinated, as it were, and I wished to win him to escape from that dead life in the country, to try the power of my beauty upon men."

"But this man is different, for he moves me as no other could."

"He is a grand-looking man, too, though I detest clergymen."

"Ah, me! if he only knew me as I am, if he only knew how terribly wicked I am, how he would turn from me in horror."

"What splendid eyes he has, what a physique! just my idea of a perfect man, and, brave indeed, in spite of his cloth."

"A clergyman! Why, if I had met him just before I became the very devil that I am, I could have been so different."

"But now? Bah! I am tied to that man, and by my own act, too."

"How often have I wished that the marriage had been a mock one, as he intended it should be."

"But, no; I am bound to that man."

"Ha! what damning thoughts surge through my brain and breast to free myself from him, if I love this man and can win him, if he is free to win me."

"A word to the police would end it for Doctor Delmar, and that word I will—"

The messenger's arrival with the note from Doctor Delmar, bidding her come to him, interrupted her evil thoughts, and a moment after came the ring at the bell which announced her visitor, whom she had prepared to receive.

The servant brought in a card bearing the name:

"REV. ARCHER STAPLETON,
"Holy Saints' Parish."

"Admit him at once, Colon."

The servant obeyed, and the handsome young "clergyman," who had sprung into the East River the day of the ferry-boat collision entered the boudoir of the beautiful woman.

He was dressed in a fashionable suit of black, thoroughly orthodox, a spotless white tie, gold-rimmed eye-glasses, yet looked the man withal.

He came forward in a courtly manner, and as he took the pretty hand extended so graciously to him, said:

"I am glad to find that you have not suffered from your adventure, Miss Delmar."

Miss Delmar confessed that she had not even caught a cold.

She smiled her sweetest, spoke in her lowest accents, and was perfectly irresistible.

She was so glad that the Reverend Archer Stapleton had kept his promise and called, and she had taken a liberty perhaps, but he must forgive her for it.

She wished to present to him a watch and chain, one of rare workmanship, as it struck the hours, halves and quarters, and was also a sportsman's time-piece, a stop-watch, to time race-horses—but ah! she forgot he was a clergyman, and could therefore only use the stop-hand on the bishop's sermons.

She had noticed that he had his watch on the day he saved her from death, a death she shuddered to think of, so of course it was ruined.

"See, this one has my initials upon it in monogram—D. D.—my name is Di, you know, Di Delmar—and I have had engraven around them:

"A souvenir of a noble act, to Archer Stapleton from Di Delmar."

"I had it engraven after receiving your card yesterday."

"You will take it from me, will you not, dear Mr. Stapleton?"

Her haughty head was near his, as she bent over the beautiful watch and exquisite chain, and she certainly was a most fascinating creature.

Yes, he would accept it, as he knew that she wished him to do so.

So he put the watch on, fastened the chain in the button-hole of his clerical-cut vest, and soon after arose to go, with the remark:

"Yours is an uncommon name, Miss Delmar, and I have only met it once before, in a physician, whose card was given me not long ago."

"Are you any relation of his?"

"No, I have no relatives other than my brother, who lives in the country, for I am a country girl, you know."

He did not know, but seemed interested, and she told him of her dear little cottage home, the "dearest spot on earth" to her, she said, on the banks of the loved Susquehanna.

And she talked on, in her sweet, soft way, telling the young clergyman that she did not even know of a Doctor Delmar, and thus detaining him for yet another hour.

"I must go," he said at last.

"Do you return to New York, may I ask?"

He did, and then came the words:

"If you will wait until I throw on my wraps, and order my carriage, I will drive you over, for I am going to the New York Hotel to call upon a friend, so will set you down there."

He would be delighted, he said, and while she went to change her costume for a street dress, he looked about the library in an interested way.

His eyes fell upon the crumpled paper, and he very coolly unfolded and read it.

Then he placed it where he had found it, in the waste-basket.

He strolled into the parlor and picked up a photograph album.

He saw there a photograph of herself, taken some time before, in Chicago, and he jotted down the name of the photographer.

Then he fairly started as his eyes fell upon another photograph, for beneath it was written the name:

"RUDOLPH SELDON."

The writing was in a feminine hand, evidently.

A moment after, when Miss Delmar came into the library, she found the young divine piously conniving a handsomely-bound Bible in which he had found something to interest him deeply.

The carriage had come around, a *coupé* drawn by a large black horse and with the regulation coachman upon the box.

"To the New York Hotel," said the fair lady, and an hour after the *coupé* halted there and the clergyman aided her to alight.

She bade him farewell, hoped to see him soon again, and he bowed low and departed.

But he did not go very far, and, entering a hack, said:

"Keep yonder *coupé* in sight."

A moment after Di Delmar came out of the hotel.

She had only entered it as a blind to him, and entering her *coupé* was driven to a number in Bond street.

The hack followed, and, as it passed, the Reverend Archer Stapleton—in reality Octave Archer with several aliases—saw that the place where Miss Delmar had entered was the office of "Doctor Delmar."

CHAPTER L.

"D. D."

"Ah! Reverend Shamoo O'Breon, I am glad to see you," exclaimed Chief Williams, as the ministerial-looking personage entered his private office three days after the visit of Detective Dewhurst to Di Delmar.

"You have got me mixed, chief, for this time I am the Reverend Archer Stapleton," said Dare Dewhurst, with a smile.

"Well, I stand corrected; but you are a born detective, Dewhurst, and an actor as well, for I never saw a man who could change his disguises

as you can, while both Harvey and Dana are also excellent.

"You are a strong team, I assure you."

"But, any news?"

"I'll tell you, chief."

"You know I saved the life of a lady the other day?"

"Yes."

"Her name was Delmar."

"Ah! any relation to the doctor?"

"She says not, and even did not know of him."

"But she is a wonderfully beautiful woman, and a mysterious one as well."

"I was sure that I saw her the other day with Doctor Delmar, and, passing her home one day, I saw a man coming out who, in spite of his disguise as a peddler, I recognized as a crook who is now under our eye."

"This made me suspicious, and I set to work to find out about the lady, as a slip of her tongue calling herself Mrs., and correcting it to miss, gave me a hint that she was living a lie."

"I discovered that she owns the house she lives in, and keeps a bank account in the First National, where a gentleman deposits money to her credit each week."

"I took the bank officer's place there one Saturday, waited at the rail, and it was Doctor Delmar who deposited the money for her, and also a liberal sum in his own name."

"So I wrote and asked if I could call, and, receiving permission, I called three days ago."

"It was in the morning, and then it was she said she had never heard of Delmar, and more, that she was a country girl, dwelling upon the Susquehanna River until she inherited a fortune and came to New York to live."

"She said she would drive me over to New York, as she was coming to the city, and while she was changing her costume I read a note in the scrap basket which made an appointment for Miss Delmar and was signed 'D. D.'"

"Which might stand for Doctor Delmar?"

"Which did stand for Doctor Delmar, for, after leaving me at the New York Hotel, she went into the ladies' entrance, until she thought I was out of sight, and then came out and drove to the doctor's."

"Ah! your story is most interesting, Dewhurst," and the chief took up an official-looking document before him.

"This proved to me that she *did* know Doctor Delmar; but that is not all, for, in looking over an album, while she was getting ready, three photographs struck me."

"One was of herself, taken in Chicago, and another of Rudolph Seldon, whom my friend, Detective Dana, you know, says is the murderer of Cashier Clark, and who is now a fugitive from the inheritance he claimed as his."

"The third was a photograph, or rather a tin-type, of Miss Delmar, as a girl of sixteen, I judged, and stamped on the card around it was the name of the artist and village where it was taken, and which is on the Susquehanna River."

"I at once went to the place, found her old home, which is a cottage near the river and a mile and a half from the village; but her mother is not there, as she said she was, and it is in the care of the farmer."

"Now, somehow, I connect this beautiful woman with crooks, believe she is living a double life, and as she has the photograph of Rudolph Seldon, whom I am determined to find, I intend to shadow her until I solve the mystery, although it will be against my nature to have to hunt a woman to prison, and one, too, whose life I had saved."

"I had better have let her drown; but see here, she forced upon me the acceptance of this magnificent watch and chain, as an appreciation of my saving her from drowning."

The chief took the watch, glanced at it critically, and then turned to a book on the desk and read:

"Solid 18 K. gold case, octagonal in shape, No. 17410, and strikes the hours, halves and quarters."

"Has stop hand as well and monogram D. D. on outside of case."

"The very watch as I live, excepting the extra engraving," cried Detective Dewhurst.

"Yes, it was stolen from Dave Dunn, the turfman, one year ago, and as it was a present to him from his jockeys he offered a thousand dollars reward for it."

"This looks bad, Dewhurst, for the lady; but she is beyond harm from the law now."

"Beyond harm! she is at her home, sir."

"You have been out of town, you know, for the lady in question is dead."

"Dead!" and in spite of his nerve the detective started visibly.

"Yes, she was found under a pier on the East River, upheld by her dress having caught on a spike."

"An oysterman found her and sent for me, and I had her taken to the Morgue."

"Upon my return to the office I found an order from the chief of police to look up just such a person as I had taken to the Morgue."

"She had been reported missing by her coachman, who reported driving her to Doctor Delmar's office, and being dismissed by her, she telling him she would attend the matinee and then take a carriage back home."

"As she did not come, the next day search was made for her, and my men brought in word that a fisherman, on his smack on the stream, had seen a carriage drive to the pier at midnight, of the day you saw her, Dewhurst, and a man got out.

"He dropped something into the river, and then, entering the vehicle, it drove rapidly away.

"Feeling suspicious, I had a *post-mortem* made, and Doctor Dillon Spotswood asserts that she was *poisoned*."

"Ah! and she wore diamond earrings and other jewelry of rare value when I saw her last."

"She had jewelry on, but it was not of much value."

"Then it was changed after her death, and for the purpose of leading to the belief that she came to her death by an accident."

"True, and she had her pocketbook with some thirty dollars in it."

"Thirty! I saw a hundred-dollar bill, the outer one of a roll, when she took it out to hand her coachman a bill to pay for some things she ordered at the market, where she stopped."

"You are right in your conjecture then that a change of jewelry and money was made after her death, to make believe her death was an accident."

"Is she at the Morgue now?"

"Yes, and I sent over for her servants to identify her, and you can go with me and see if the body is that of your Miss Delmar."

"And have you any suspicion of the murderer?"

"A carriage was seen to leave Doctor Delmar's about midnight of the night in question, and the doctor came out bearing a lady in his arms, and he said to an officer that it was an invalid who had been taken with a fainting-fit in his office, and he was anxious to get her home."

"So I had him arrested, and he is now in the Tombs; but let us go to the Morgue."

And to the Morgue they went, arriving there just as the coachman and maid of Di Delmar came out, the latter weeping.

"It is your mistress, then?" said the chief.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Wait."

And he strode into the ghastly rendezvous of the dead, if I may so put it, accompanied by Detective Dewhurst.

There upon the marble slab lay the yet still beautiful Di, her form, even in death, perfect, her hair hanging about her exquisite shoulders in clammy masses, and her pearl-like teeth set firmly together.

"It is she," said Detective Dewhurst, and he turned sadly away, the thought in his mind that she had better have drowned that day in the East River than live a few days longer to meet the fate she had.

"This gentleman is a friend of your mistress, and I will see to it that the body is sent home and decent burial given it, while he will take charge of the house," said the chief.

And he addressed the maid and coachman, while to Dewhurst he said:

"Go and take charge at once, for I'll send the body and also your authority."

"You may be able to make some discoveries of importance, for, like you, I am now convinced that the woman was a crook, and, if so, Doctor Delmar is one also."

"I am sure of it," was the reply.

Two hours after the body of Di Delmar Seldon lay confined in her handsome parlor, while seated in the library, in charge of the house, in the mighty name of the law was Detective Dewhurst.

CHAPTER LI.

THE LAST GLASS.

WHEN Di Delmar left the man she supposed to be the Reverend Archer Stapleton, she drove to the office of Doctor Delmar.

It was just two o'clock, and he was expecting her, for he opened the door himself.

"I have a box for you at the theater, so dismiss your coachman, telling him you will drive home later."

She turned, hesitated, looked him squarely in the face and asked:

"Why?"

"It is important that you remain, for I need you."

She hesitated a moment more, then returned to the curb and dismissed the *coupé*.

"Well, why did you send for me to come here?" she asked, as she returned to the office.

"Come, and I will tell you."

He led the way to his living rooms above, rung a bell, and when a servant appeared, ordered dinner at four.

Then he said:

"Di, I sent for you to come here, for I wished to talk with you and be sure of no listeners."

"Now here I am, for I had this house rebuilt to my own taste."

"See, I will call my servant again, and when he touches the knob of the outer door, I will be warned. Hark!"

He touched a bell, and a moment after there

came a distinct ring in the room where they sat.

"He has turned the knob, you see."

"A decanter of wine," said the doctor, and as the servant retired, the same signal was heard.

"You see, I have no eavesdroppers here, Di."

"You certainly live in luxury here, doctor."

"Yes, and I have my business running like clockwork now, and if I cannot reap a million in a couple of years, and then get away unsuspected, it will be a great surprise to me—There, my man is coming," and again the signal sounded.

The servant entered with a silver salver, containing a decanter of sherry and glasses, with a cruet of bitters.

"Sherry and bitters will give you an appetite, Di, and I have ordered a most tempting dinner, knowing well your epicurean tastes—There! my servant has gone, you see, so we are to be undisturbed."

"And you can now tell me why you sent for me?"

"Yes; you very nearly lost your life some weeks ago."

"How do you know?"

"I saw an account in the paper, and one of my Ghouls was on the boat and described you."

"There is but one woman like you, Di."

"Yes, I was saved by a young clergyman, the Reverend Archer Stapleton."

"The Reverend Fiddlesticks! The man is a detective."

"No!" and Di was certainly surprised.

"I say yes."

"Are you sure?"

"He is the fellow who so cleverly caught me and kept us out of Lindo's diamonds."

"Do you really mean it?"

"Yes, and the Ghoul who saw him save you was shadowing him at the time."

"You amaze me."

"Yes, he amazes me, and I know he is on the search for me; but your genius has gotten me into a disguise and playing a part that is beyond all recognition."

"I met Chief Williams the other day and stopped and chatted with him, for you know I saved Miss Stapleton's life, and the chief was there on that occasion."

"I read of it; but I find it hard to believe this man who saved me is a fraud."

"No, not a fraud, but a reality, for he is a detective pure and simple."

"Have you seen him since?"

"No," and the lie came readily, unaccompanied by the slightest flush of shame at telling it.

"Well, look out for him."

"I will; but now to the reason for this sending for me?"

The man seemed to be just a trifle nervous and did not answer immediately.

Then he said, as he approached and stood before the lovely woman, whose face, like an angel, was a mask to hide the heart of a devil:

"Di."

"Yes?"

"I can make just two million dollars if you will help me."

"How can I?"

"Will you do it?"

"Have I not saved you from prison and made you the fortune you now have?"

"True, your level head has done much; but I wish you to do more."

"Well?"

"Do you love me very much?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I wish an answer."

"Well, no."

"It would not break your heart to give me up, at least for a while?"

"I could survive it, I think; but there is no backing out of our contract, for you have to make the money that I demand."

"I do make it, and each week deposit your share in the bank for you, and a large share it is too."

"Just equal to what you claim is yours, though I doubt its being so."

"You put so much away for the expenses of the Wolves, so much to salaries, twenty per cent, to commissions to the people, and the balance for you and myself."

"That is the way you give the statement to me; but we will not quarrel on that point, for I have all I care for, only I wish money laid up for the future."

"It is to prevent a long delay, and to be able to get a vast fortune at one stroke that I wish you to help me."

"Tell me what I can do."

"I told you that I saved the life of Miss Joyce Stapleton?"

"Yes."

"She is an only child, and her father is worth several millions."

"Incidentally he told me that he had turned over to her her fortune, that is, half what he was worth, to let her have it in her own name and manage in her own way."

"This he did some two weeks ago."

"Well?"

"Now, she is very thankful to me for having saved her life—"

"Naturally."

"And in truth, Di, the girl loves me."

"I do not wonder, for you are a very fascinating man, whether you be your old self, Rudolph Seldon—"

"Sh!"

"Oh, you know there are no eavesdroppers here, for you said so."

"Whether you be your old self, Rudolph Seldon, or under your *aliases* of Roger Ravenheld, Baron Rhu Delmar, Doctor Delmar, or what else, you are a very fascinating man."

"I fascinated you, Di."

"That is just it. I was fascinated by what my marriage to you would bring to me; but I have been sadly mistaken thus far in all save money; but the future must bring some time to me power and enjoyment; but I would hear more of Miss Joyce Stapleton."

There was a sneer in the woman's manner, in all she said, which the man could not but feel.

But he determined to come boldly to the front, and said:

"Well, Di, my plan is simply to get possession of Miss Stapleton's money, end her days and the old man's, too, and then we are millionaires in earnest."

"And how do you propose to do this?"

"Why, by a mock marriage to her."

"Never! I say, never! I am wicked, yes, I have sinned from my ambition to get gold, power, and be somebody in the world, but I say to you, Rudolph Seldon, you shall not do an act so vile against a noble woman such as Joyce Stapleton is."

"How do you know what she is?"

"I know it from what I saw, for when in the disguise of a poor woman she came to me and offered help."

"I did not ask it, I was simply playing my game to get Ghouls for your robber gang."

"I told her a pitiful story, and she gave me ten dollars, handed me her card and told me to send to her if I needed more, and she would help me and get work for me."

"I looked into her noble face and turned away, for her eyes went into my wicked heart, it seemed."

"The next day I returned her her ten dollars and wrote her that I did not need it, that I was playing a part for a fortune."

"Now you wish me to keep silent while you make her, as she believes, your wife, that you may get rid of her after you have robbed her."

"I say no, and more, if you cross the threshold of that door again, I will write to her and tell her that you are a fraud."

"Now dare do it, sir, for I defy you!"

She had lost her calm, sneering manner.

The good that was in her had been stirred, and never had her husband seen her so violent before.

He knew that there was but one thing to do, and that was to yield.

So he said:

"My dear Di, don't get so violent, for I have no idea of doing what you would not wish me to do."

"I intended it as a means to rapid riches, and in fact an enormous fortune."

"Then I thought we could go abroad and—"

"You cannot deceive me, Doctor Delmar, and you shall not deceive Joyce Stapleton."

"Very well, we'll say no more about it, and here comes dinner, so you must enjoy it."

And enjoy it she did; but how little did she dream of the shadow hanging over her.

At last she said that she must go, for night was coming on.

"You must have one of my *cafés*, Di, for you always liked them."

"Yes," she said.

And she gazed absently into the fire as he made two.

"That you may never have another pang in life, only joy unto the end, Di," he said, as he touched his glass to hers.

The words were ominous, full of dread meaning, but she saw not the bitter in the sweet, the serpent in the flower, and drank of the fatal cup.

He took the glass from her hand and said:

"Sit down a few minutes more, for it is not yet night."

He led her to a chair, and as she sunk into it she cried:

"It is night! all is darkness—my God! Rudolph Seldon, you have—taken—my—life!"

The beautiful head fell back, and the white face was upturned to his.

"She dared to defy me," he said huskily.

CHAPTER LII.

THE PRICE OF A LIFE.

THE city was startled by the accusation made against a handsome French gentleman, who was often seen in the Park on horseback, or in his landau, and at the theater and opera.

He had become quite a well-known figure in metropolitan life, and though the "profession," that is the medical fraternity did not recognize him, or rather seem to know much about him, others were much pleased with his handsome face, fine form, and more particularly the great depth which there was to his purse.

So it was that the town took a gasp of surprise, and then put on its look of horror, when it was reported that Doctor Delmar had murdered a beautiful lady.

The beautiful lady in question was something more of a mystery than was the French doctor.

She lived in a style of elegance unsurpassed in a quiet nook in Brooklyn, and had her servants and her turn-outs.

Who she was, other than that she was known as Miss Delmar, no one seemed to know.

She was very rich, or said to be, and enjoyed dwelling alone, like a beautiful hermitess.

Heads were shaken wisely when she was said to have been drowned by her physician.

Certain it was that she was dead, had lain in the Morgue until identified by her servants, and it was then said that her doctor had poisoned her, and to hide his crime had driven her body to the pier at midnight and tossed it into the river.

Be that as it may, the doctor was arrested one morning and taken to the Tombs.

His office and sumptuously-furnished rooms had been looked through by the police, but nothing of a compromising nature had been found in them.

A locksmith occupied one side of the basement of his double house, and a real-estate agent the other, while a lawyer had rooms opposite the doctor's office on the first floor.

The second floor was the doctor's living rooms, his bedroom, library, parlor and dining-room, with kitchen in the rear.

A society of some kind, just what was not known, but a secret society, it was said, had a hall on the third floor, and there the doctor's servants dwelt also.

The house belonged to the doctor, and he had lately purchased it and fitted it over to suit himself.

But the doctor was in that massive pile of stone which resembles an Egyptian temple known as the Tombs.

He had been arrested in his office, showed surprise at the charge against him, but went almost cheerfully along with the detective who served the papers upon him.

And there he remained in his cell, while his victim was coffined like a queen and borne to the grave with considerable pomp for one who was a stranger and a mystery.

The day after the funeral the doctor was told that a lady wished to see him.

"Who is she?" he asked.

"She gave no name and is closely veiled."

"I will see her."

So the veiled visitor entered the cell, and in his courtly way the doctor arose and welcomed her.

The lady asked to see the prisoner alone, and to emphasize her request thrust a twenty-dollar gold-piece into the hand of the keeper.

"I thank you, lady, but we draw our pay from the city, and you can see the prisoner alone without this," said the honest keeper.

Dr. Delmar arched his handsome brows in amazement at sight of an honest man.

"My good fellow, you are an ass!" he said, with deep sympathy in his tones at having found such a person.

The jailer bowed his way out, and the visitor said:

"You are sure no one will hear what I have to say, for I am the mother of the prisoner?"

The doctor eyed her with a peculiar expression, while the guard said:

"Poor lady!"

Then he departed and the man asked, coolly:

"Well, who are you?"

"As I said, your mother."

"Nonsense."

"Well, mother-in-law."

"Ah, Mrs. Delmar, this is a surprise, yet I cannot say a pleasant one."

"I do not expect compliments, nor do I ask them."

"I came to seek you on business."

"You have received your allowances, have you not?"

"Oh, yes, with great regularity."

"Then what is the trouble?"

"You are in prison," and the visitor looked about her with a shudder.

"That is evident."

"You are accused of murdering Di."

"Such is the charge against me."

"As they have found the body and gotten facts against you, there will be no doubt of your being hanged?"

"Doubtless."

"You love life?"

"Oh, yes."

"You are a rich man."

"Ah! now I see your drift; you are anxious about what I have?"

"Oh no."

"What then?"

"What would you give to save your life?"

"It is useless to attempt any escape here."

"I mean, if I have these gates opened, so you can walk out a free man before the world, what will you give?"

"If such a thing could happen, any sum."

"Call it a hundred thousand in cash."

"It is about all I am worth, but I'll give it."

"Look here, my dear son, I know that you kept your account and Di's at the First National."

"You entered your share in your own name, and you deposited hers in her name, and yours."

"That is, she drew checks against her account, and you did not; but your check was good for all that was deposited to the double credit, as would have been her check had she known it."

"You seem well-informed."

"Oh yes, I do not go through the world with my eyes shut."

"Well?"

"Give me a check for the sum named, one hundred thousand dollars, and I will set you free."

"How?"

"It matters not how; give me the check and you will see."

"You will draw all my money and then wave me an adieu from the crowd as I stand upon the gallows."

"I will not draw the money until to-morrow, as it is time for the bank to close now, so give me the check."

"I'll do it; but woe be unto you if you fail me."

He turned to the table, took from his pocket a small check-book and wrote one for the sum named, a fortune, and which took all of his own separate deposit and what was to the double account of himself and his wife.

"Thank you, my son; but have you nerve?"

"I think so."

"Then prove it when the time comes, and don't make a fool of yourself."

"Farewell, my son," and the woman, who had not raised her veil, called to the keeper and left the cell.

The time dragged along to the prisoner, and just as the night shadows began to creep into the gloomy place, a stir was heard in the corridor, and two ladies appeared, one being the mother-in-law of Doctor Delmar.

As his eyes fell upon the other he uttered a startled cry and nearly fell to the floor.

But he recovered himself just as the grated door was flung open and a slender form sprung toward him, and a pair of arms were thrown about his neck, with the cry:

"My poor, dear Delmar! would they hang you for a crime you never committed?"

"My God! it is Miss Delmar herself!" came through the shut teeth of Detective Dewhurst, who had just entered the prison to see the prisoner.

Then he added:

"In the name of heaven! how could I make such a mistake in identification of the body?"

He stepped aside crestfallen as the prisoner passed out, along with his wife and mother, a free man.

He followed slowly, and then saw the doctor enter a carriage and drive up town, after he had aided the ladies into a vehicle and given to the driver the address of Di Delmar in Brooklyn.

"That man is a crook, and I know it, and the woman, too, and I'll prove them so; but after my mistake about that body at the Morgue I must go slow, yes, very slow."

"I will go over and see Di Delmar as soon as I have gotten on my ecclesiastical togs."

And springing into a hack he drove to his own quarters to "change his colors," for he was dressed as a Polish officer, and had gone to the Tombs to get a better view of the prisoner's face than he had yet had, for he was becoming each day more and more convinced that he had met the prisoner when he was not known as Doctor Delmar.

CHAPTER LIII.

TWO CONFESSIONS.

THE servant who the next morning admitted the young clergyman, as she supposed the detective to be, met him with a joyous exclamation about the return of her mistress.

The detective left in charge of the house, along with the servants, had departed upon the arrival of Mrs. Delmar and her mother, and the beautiful woman was once again mistress of her own house.

The morning papers were full of the narrow escape made by Doctor Delmar, and he had the sympathy of all.

It had come out that he had said only in his defense that he had aided an invalid patient into her carriage and driven her home, and then, too, the truth had to be told, and a reporter got it from Mrs. Delmar's mother how her daughter, when very young, had married the doctor, but as they were not congenial, they had lived apart from each other.

The doctor had never said that he was not married or single, whatever he had implied, and his wife had visited him that day and dismissed her coachman, and then, receiving a telegram calling her to her mother, had gone there.

The doctor had known nothing of the telegram, he being out when it came to her care,

and though she had written a note, sending it by messenger to her home, it had, in some way, miscarried.

The mother had returned home with the daughter, and just in time.

Such was the story told by Di Delmar's mother, for she would not see the reporter, and this had been read by Dare Dewhurst.

But he was puzzled.

The jewelry shown him at the Morgue as that which Di Delmar had on, was not what she had worn the day of her reputed death, for it was of one-tenth the value.

Then, too, how could he make such a mistake in the identification?

Still, the woman he saw at the Tombs was the very counterpart of Di Delmar.

To make matters more clear in his mind, he had called, and as the Rev. Archer Stapleton was ushered at once into the library.

The door closed behind him and he advanced to a weeping form he saw upon the sofa.

He heard the smothered words, smothered in grief, for his presence was not known:

"Oh! how will all this end? this fearful, this terrible fraud?"

"I beg pardon, Mrs. Delmar, but I called to—"

He paused, for she had sprung to her feet with a startled cry, and asked, sternly:

"Sir, who are you that has intruded upon me?"

He was bewildered.

Had she lost her reason, he wondered?

"My dear friend, have you forgotten me so soon?"

"Never in my life did I see you before, sir."

He stepped closer to her, while from his brain the cobwebs began to clear away.

"It was your twin sister, then, that I knew, whose life I saved?"

It was a shot at random, fired off-hand, but it hit dead center, for the answer came:

"Yes, sir, it was Di."

A thrill of joy went through the man, and metaphorically speaking he shook hands with himself upon his great genius.

"Miss Delmar, sit down, and let us have a talk together."

"Do you know that you have just betrayed yourself?"

"Ah, in what way? what have I done?" and the tears came again into the beautiful eyes.

"You confessed that you were not Di Delmar, but her twin sister."

She looked frightened now, and he said gently:

"Miss Delmar, I am your friend, and I'll prove it by befriending you."

"Let me tell you a story of what you have done; but first tell me where your mother is?"

"She has gone to New York, to the bank."

"I see; but to my story," and in an earnest way, kind and gentle, he told of her sister's death, and that Doctor Delmar was really her murderer.

He won her confidence completely, and then she confessed all.

And such a confession from beautiful lips!

And such a confession for Dare Dewhurst to hear!

She told how her mother lived at the little farm on the Susquehanna, and had had two children, her sister Di and herself, Violet.

Her mother and father had been divorced, before she, Violet, could remember, and while she had gone with her father, her sister had been taken by her mother.

Two months before, her father had died, and then, with the money he had left her, she had gone to her mother.

Di was married, her mother said, and to a rich man who sent her money each month.

When asked who her sister had married, the startling answer came:

"Doctor Delmar; but mother said that he had assumed Di's name, his own being Rudolph Seldon."

A few days before, she went on to say, her mother had been startled by reading something in the village paper, and had then told her that Di's husband was in jail accused of murdering her.

She said she knew Di had committed suicide, that she had letters from her saying that she was unhappy, and meant to do so, but poor Doctor Delmar would be hanged if she, Violet, did not save him.

To do this she must impersonate Di, for she was the image of her in face and form, and she would also get Di's fortune, which the doctor would give her for saving him from the gallows.

Thus entreated, she had yielded, against her will, and had come on to New York with her mother.

The latter had gone to her sister's home, and gotten the names of the servants, and then had visited Doctor Delmar in prison.

Then she had come for her and they had gone to the Tombs when Violet had played well her part, gotten the instant release of the prisoner, and then had come to her sister's home.

Such was the story, and then Dare Dewhurst had one to tell of what he knew about "Doctor Delmar."

He went back to his youth and told how his

mother had died when he was an infant, and her sister, his Aunt Archer, had adopted him.

Then his father had married again, his second wife being a widow with one child, a boy.

The second wife had held a wonderful influence over his father, so much so that he did not acknowledge him, his own son, and let the other, his step-son, be reared as his own child.

The second wife had died, and the boy, her son, had grown up to be wild, extravagant, and a gambler.

He it was who had married Di Delmar, and as he now knew who the husband of her sister was, it explained much to him that before had been obscure.

Rudolph Seldon had reached his father before he died, but death had followed soon after his arrival, and, holding a secret over the lawyer, who was executor as well, he had forced him, as he had believed, to change the will, for Judge Seldon had repented of deserting his own son, and tried to find him, determined, if he was not dead, to leave him his fortune, and his step-son simply a legacy.

The lawyer had not changed the will to suit Rudolph Seldon, but sought to find the real heir.

Doctor Reynolds, the physician of Judge Seldon, had been shot in a gambling scrape, and, sending for the lawyer, Ernest Wilber, had confessed to him that he had seen a woman slip into the room while Rudolph Seldon slept in his chair by his dying father, and put poison in the medicine.

He had seen it too late to speak, and so had said nothing, accusing Rudolph Seldon of the act to force money from him.

The doctor further said that the prisoner, he afterward found out, was the daughter of the nurse who had charge of Judge Seldon in his last illness, and who had been recently married to Rudolph Seldon.

Her mother, for fear the judge would cut his reckless son off, had applied for the place of nurse, had found out how the will left the fortune, and had sent for the daughter.

Determined that the will should not be changed, the young wife had poisoned Judge Seldon.

Then the detective continued:

"All this I knew through the confessions of the lawyer and the doctor, but who the prisoner was, other than the wife of Rudolph Seldon, I did not know, Miss Delmar.

"Now, knowing that your sister, as you have told me, recently married Rudolph Seldon, I know that she was the poisoner of Judge Seldon, my father, for I am Octave Archer Seldon!"

"I have knocked about the world since the death of my aunt, and as a miner had promise of a fortune some day, so, independent of my father, I hoped for riches and was happy, for I had met one whom I loved, and who was my promised wife.

"But here Rudolph Seldon, or Ravenfield, as his real name is, crossed my path most cruelly, for he sought to rob a bank, and, killing the cashier, he escaped, while I was thrown into prison as the murderer and robber.

"The woman I loved did not believe me guilty. She pledged her jewels to save me, and I accepted liberty to hunt down the guilty one and clear my name.

"Now that you have told me that Rudolph Seldon was your sister's husband, I recall the face that has puzzled me so, for I see him in Doctor Delmar.

"He killed Cashier Clark; he sought to change my father's will; he severed the hand of Detective Dick Dana, who had him prisoner, and, as he believed, killed him; he sought to rob Mr. Lindo, the diamond-merchant, and then appears as Doctor Delmar.

"He did kill your poor sister, but it were better for her to be dead, with such a life as hers was.

"And this morning, only, my two allies told me of the commotion created by some of their detective work. One of them, by name Harvey Howard Burns, joined a band of crooks known as the Ghouls of New York, and the other, Dick Dana, whose hand Doctor Delmar severed, made a discovery in the alleged doctor's which he did not make known to the police, for he spent a night there while the owner was in jail.

"What he discovered was that Doctor Delmar had a secret vault in his rooms. In it was a disguise and mask, such as Harvey Howard had told him was worn by the chief of the Ghouls.

"This stamped Doctor Delmar as the chief of the Ghouls, and after what you have told me I can only say the man-hunters have run the wolves to their den.

"Now, Miss Delmar, your mother is guilty in that she has sinned for gold; but let us believe that she did not know that your sister poisoned my father.

"She has evidently bled Delmar, or rather, Rudolph Seldon, well, to get him free, through you, so she has ample means to live upon. As I can hang this King of Crooks on other crimes than the murder of your sister, let me advise you to take what things you wish from your sister's home, and, with your mother, sail on the first steamer for Europe; otherwise you may be

held, perhaps punished severely by the law for cheating it, as you did, by impersonating your dead sister.

"I wish to be lenient with you, and, as I owe to you that I find Rudolph Seldon, who clears my name of the stain of infamy, I will be glad to help you go free, and, to protect you, will send one of my men to escort you to a place of safety.

"It then only need be thought that you have fled, when Doctor Delmar was found out to be the crook he is.

"Do you accept my terms, Miss Delmar, for, let me tell you now that I have authority, as I am a detective chief."

The beautiful girl had seemed to hang upon every word that Octave Seldon, as he is now known to be, had uttered, and when she realized the enormity of her sister's crimes, and of Rudolph Ravenfield's, she felt that she was indeed being protected and kindly dealt with.

So she said earnestly:

"God bless you, sir! I will accept your terms, and thank Heaven I have enough to live on without touching a dollar of that man's stolen, blood-stained gold! My mother shall yield up what she has also."

"You are a different woman from what your unfortunate sister was, Miss Delmar," said Octave Seldon warmly, and soon after he took his leave.

As he did so, Mrs. Delmar entered the house—a woman with a handsome face, yet hard and avaricious.

Di had taken after her mother; Violet, without doubt, after her father, was the detective's mental commentary upon seeing the woman.

Whatever it was that Mrs. Delmar was told by her daughter, she certainly found her no longer a willing tool, and when Detective Dick Dana called for them, that night, the woman was most anxious to get away, frightened, conscience-stricken, humiliated to a pitiful degree.

CHAPTER LIV. CONCLUSION.

WHILE Detective Dick Dana, the one-armed detective, was taking Miss Delmar and her mother to a place of safety, Detective Dewhurst, with Howard Harvey Burns as his lieutenant, and two-score officers from Chief Williams's command, made a call upon "Doctor Delmar."

Detective Dewhurst entered the office as the Reverend Octave Stapleton, and Harvey Howard looked like a divinity student.

Doctor Delmar was in his office, just getting ready to go up to the Council Chamber, for he had summoned a meeting for that night.

He had something to tell the Ghouls about having to go away for a few weeks, said "few weeks" he intending should mean for years, for he had come to the conclusion that, in spite of his escape, he had better be content with what he had and depart for foreign lands.

"Doctor Delmar, I believe!" said the Reverend Stapleton.

"Yes, sir," was the brusque reply.

"You are mistaken, sir, for you are Rudolph Ravenfield, and I arrest you for murder and robbery!"

The nerve of the crook broke down. He tried to speak, to raise his hand to his heart, but could not, and the detective continued:

"Permit me to introduce myself, Rudolph, as Octave Archer Seldon, my own father's heir, and at present known as Detective Dewhurst! Hold out your hands, sir!"

The King of Crooks raised his hands as though to obey, but one suddenly turned inward, and a derringer pistol, deftly slipped from a pocket in his sleeve, sent a bullet through his heart.

The King of Crooks had cheated the gallows! And up to the Council Chamber went the detectives, Howard Harvey leading the way, and the astounded Ghouls found themselves entrapped.

Resistance was useless, and "Salvation Sal" set the example of peacefully surrendering by holding up her hands and shouting:

"Hands up all around, pals, for the lightning has struck us!"

It was but a few minutes' work to iron the Ghouls, and they were hastened away to prison, while Chief Williams and a number of city officials were sent for by the detective, and the quarters of the King of Crooks searched from cellar to roof.

And the story of the two fugitives was told, too; it was made known who was the murderer of Cashier Clark, and that Con Carter, the counterfeiter, and another of his band, were among the prisoners captured, so that the young engraver's name could be cleared of the charge they had made against him, if further proof was needed of his innocence than what his actions had proven in his Secret Service work.

The next day the two Fugitive Detectives started for D—, and as Detective Dick Dana, of the severed hand, met them there, and they carried papers from Captain Williams, there was no trouble in proving their innocence.

They left the town free men, their names no longer sullied by the charge of crime.

To his home in Texas went Harvey Howard.

Dick Dana accompanied him for a visit of a few months, and I may here say that it was the foundation-stone of the detective's future life, for he fell in love with pretty Maude Burns, as she did with him, and, a year after, he made her his wife.

By a strange coincidence, Violet Delmar was forced to go to the city where dwelt Ernest Wilber, the lawyer, to settle up her father's will, and the attorney, who had the matter in hand, was none other than he over whom Rudolph Ravenfield had held a threat of murder of Raoul Ford.

Wilber loved the beautiful girl almost at sight, and she, with the diary of her sister Di in her possession, knew his story; and more—there it was written that Rudolph Ravenfield had confessed that he had been the cause of the duel, to get rid of Ford, whom he feared as a rival. This was balm indeed to the conscience of the lawyer.

The friendship thus begun on a business foundation ripened into a love that was lasting, and Violet became Mrs. Ernest Wilber, while her mother, anxious to forget the past and to atone for it, spent her days in exile at the Glen Cottage farm.

And the fugitive Octave?

Back to New York he went, to appear before Joyce Stapleton and to announce the end of his martyrdom and probation.

Need I say that Joyce was more than happy, and that her father was ashamed of his doubt of the noble man, for whose honor Joyce had so nobly fought and won?

Octave Seldon, of course, came into possession of his just inheritance, and now dwells with his beautiful wife, no longer a detective, but the friend of all Secret Service men, who, knowing his strange career, often stop for a visit with the master of Seldon Hall—the man who ran down the King of Crooks.

THE END.

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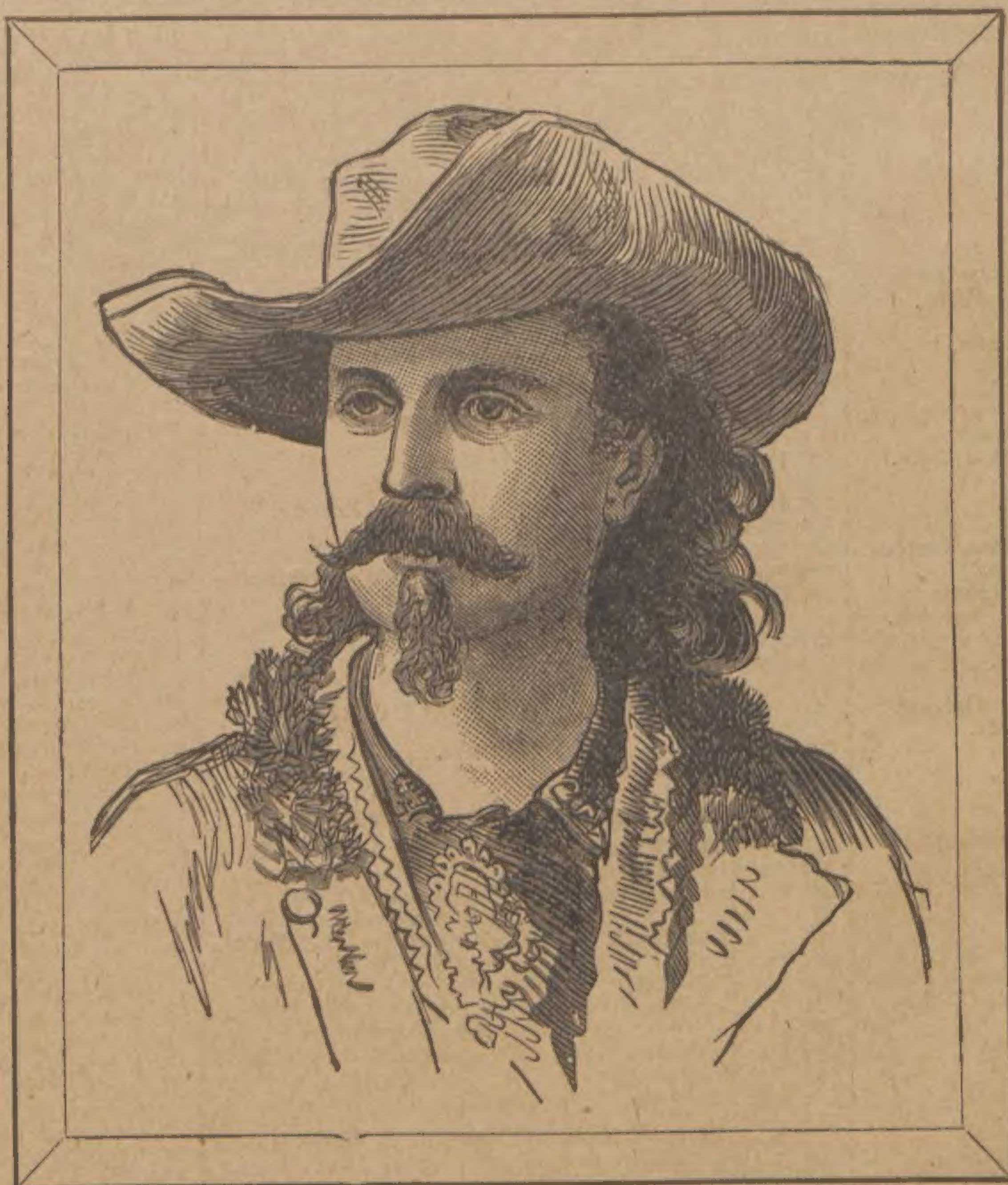
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